SWEET CLOVER

A ROMANCE OF THE WHITE CITY

BY CLARA LOUISE BURNHAM

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from Mary

A ROMANCE OF THE WHITE CITY

BY

CLARA LOUISE BURNHAM

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY
The Riverside Press, Cambridge
1895

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NINTH-THOUSAND.

The Riverside Press, Cambridge, Mass., U. S. A.
Electrotyped and Printed by H. O. Houghton & Company.

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SWEET CLOVER.

CHAPTER I.

FAIR HARVARD.

"WELL, Jack," said Mr. Van Tassel, entering his son's room at Cambridge, "the deed is done. Behold you a full-fledged alumnus of glorious old Harvard!" The speaker grasped the young fellow's hand, his face expressing his pride and gratification.

"Yes, sir," answered the graduate, springing to his feet as he cordially returned his father's greeting, "full-fledged, but rather reluctant to try my wings, I must confess. It is hard to fly away from all this."

As he spoke, he glanced around the room, one of the most luxurious in historic Holworthy. Each familiar object seemed newly invested with pleasurable association. His eyes lingered upon a silver chafing-dish, resting amid a lot of congenial litter on a mantelpiece. Jack was accustomed to admit modestly that when it came to manœuvring with a chafing-dish, he could not deny his own genius.

"You know it has been home to me for four

years," he added half-apologetically, as he pushed forward the easiest chair for his father, who dropped into it.

"I know, I know," returned the latter, nodding. "I am glad college life has been such a satisfactory experience to you. I have felt the lack of it myself often. Well, yesterday was a glorious day," he continued, with a reminiscent smile. "Fine weather, fine people. As good a climax as you could have desired. Those exercises around the tree are very amusing," the smile broadening. "I give you my word I did n't know you in that scramble. I did n't know my own boy. You were the worst-looking tramp of them all to begin with, Jack, and at the end you were the most demoralized bundle of rags of the lot."

The speaker's hearty laugh rang out. It was a matter of course that Jack should have been superlative in any college undertaking; but now a pensive smile was the young man's only response to his father's mirth. To-day's reaction found him in a rather thoughtful and sentimental mood.

The Van Tassels had always been well-looking as a family. Richard Van Tassel was a handsome man of a florid thick-set type, and he admired this sole remaining child the more that his physique was so dissimilar to his own. Tall, slender, athletic, Jack stood unconscious of his father's scrutiny, which took in every detail of his appearance, from the wavy black hair scrupulously parted in the middle, to the feet planted apart on the

thick rug. It was a delicate-featured, refined face that the young fellow had, a transparent face that betrayed feeling; that flushed with annoyance or radiated pleasure from brilliant brown eyes and perfect teeth. But now the eyes were shadowed; and when they caught the father's gaze after a half-minute's abstraction, Jack smiled with the gentle, winning expression which was his birthright, and had uncalculatingly won for him every favor he had ever asked.

"Pardon me. Did you speak? My wits are wool-gathering to-day."

Mr. Van Tassel ceased his silent satisfied survey, and picked up a book from a neighboring table. "I was about to ask you, what next?" he said.

"What next?"

"Yes; or perhaps I should say where next? I have business in Washington, regarding the World's Fair, which may detain me there some time. Are you with me?"

"No — a"— Jack appeared to rouse himself with an effort from his mental pictures. "The fact is, I've a lot of invitations that I should like to accept before I go back to Chicago."

"Very well. We will postpone talking plans, then, until that time comes. You are to go abroad for a year if you like, you know."

"Yes, thank you. I've a fancy that I would rather put off that trip awhile."

"Why so? A wedding journey in view later, perhaps?"

Jack did not appear to think this raillery required a specific answer. He smiled again, in the thoughtful mood so foreign to him.

Mr. Van Tassel, however, had been glad of an opening for the question. He listened with veiled eagerness for his son's reply, and was disappointed that none came.

When he spoke again, it was with new seriousness and a shade of embarrassment.

"You must have met many charming women, during the past four years, who are strangers to me," he said.

"Yes, I 've met a lot of women," returned Jack with a patient sigh at this irrelevance. What were charming women to a man who was saying good-by to his crew!

"But old friends are best still?" persisted his father.

"Yes, no doubt," responded the other, vaguely courteous.

"You have n't forgotten the girls at home?" said Mr. Van Tassel.

"No, — no indeed," replied his son, shaking himself together with the realization that he was playing poorly the part of host to this kindest of fathers, for whom it was impossible in the nature of things to enter into the subjects which were uppermost in Jack's interest just now. "How" — with spasmodic eagerness — "how are they all?"

"Who? Anybody in particular?"

The young man stirred restlessly. This was

persecution. "Oh no, my Hyde Park friends generally."

"There is no especial news, I believe. Mrs. Bryant fails very slowly, I think; but of course I do not dare hint such a thing to her devoted daughter."

"H'm. Are n't they all devoted?" asked Jack with waning vigor.

"Oh, Clover is the chief one. She is son and daughter both, in that family. All responsibility falls on her. A fine girl," said Mr. Van Tassel emphatically.

"A pretty one, too," returned his son, stifling a yawn. "Mildred is coming along, though. I thought she was after Clover pretty sharp, the last time I was at home. Growing to her hands and feet, you know, and all that."

"You will be glad to see Clover again," said Mr. Van Tassel tentatively.

"Yes, very glad to see them all," was the reply, delivered with conscientious heartiness.

"Not especially glad to see Clover?" continued Mr. Van Tassel; and now it was impossible even for the preoccupied graduate not to see that his father was, in his own words "driving at something."

He looked in surprise at the strong face thrown out against the dark blue cushions of the chair, and straight into the steady gaze of the gray eyes that had never looked unkindly on him. Before he could speak, the older man continued: —

"I had an idea that there was a boy and girl attachment between yourself and Clover Bryant, — a preference on your part, perhaps on hers" —

Mr. Van Tassel's face had never looked more attractive to his son than now. Its expression was so loving, so earnest, that Jack forebore to laugh, as he at first felt inclined to do.

His father did not appear to think this a laughing matter. Moreover his attitude gave promise of consent and sanction in case such compliance was called for.

"No, sir. You were mistaken," answered the young man respectfully. "There was never any sentiment there."

It was further mystifying to him that a shade of relief certainly passed over his father's face at this reply, and yet it might be explicable on the ground that although Mr. Van Tassel would not refuse his son's wishes, he was glad to find that there was no question of a union between his own family and one so poor and obscure as the Bryants.

"There might well have been a preference," was the grave answer. "Clover, young as she is, is a pearl among women. The Breckinridges have just gone abroad for a year, and Mrs. Breckinridge, before she left, told me that she had invited Clover to accompany them; but the girl refused to leave her mother and the children. Think of the way the Breckinridges will travel, and what it cost her to refuse!"

"Whew, that was rough! Clover is a brick,"

declared Jack, his eyes bright enough now with their accustomed interest in life. "It ought not to be allowed. Can't we do something? Get a trained nurse for Mrs. Bryant, and invite her and the children to our house for the year?"

Mr. Van Tassel smiled at this outburst. "We not only can't do anything," he returned, "but we must n't say anything. Clover bound Mrs. Breckinridge to secrecy, because it would be such a grief to Mrs. Bryant to discover what her daughter had renounced for her."

"She 's strong, Clover is," said Jack, with an admiring shake of the head. "I shall be glad to see her again."

Then he asked his father a question regarding business, and the subject of the Bryants was dropped.

CHAPTER II.

UNCLE ADOLPH'S LETTER.

SEVERAL weeks later, in the long, narrow back yard of one of a block of wooden houses in Chicago, a girl was hanging out clothes on a line. An occasional hot breeze blew the soft brown hair in stray locks across her forehead, and the sun beat down from the glowing sky on her unprotected head.

"Clover, Clover darling," called a weak voice from an open window, "you 've been out there so long! Are n't you almost through? You will get a sunstroke. Do, at least, put on a hat."

The girl brushed her flying hair back with one hand. "I 'm all right, mother," she called, her cheery tones contrasting pleasantly with the sad voice.

"She is doing too much. I know she is," murmured the feeble watcher within, keeping her yearning gaze on the lithe young figure. "Bless her brave heart!" The dim eyes filled.

The front door slamming broke in upon the mother's meditations, and another girl entered the shabby room where she sat. She was a tall, broad-shouldered young creature of seventeen, the face under her heavy, half-falling brown hair

flushed with heat, health, and happiness. She seemed to fill the room as she skipped up to the white-haired figure and pressed the infantile curve of her peachy cheek against the pale face.

"Oh, I wish for the thousandth time that we could live nearer the lake," she said in hearty young tones. "Every block one comes inland, one feels the difference in heat. Where is Clover?"

"In the back yard, hanging out clothes," was the anxious response. "I 'm afraid for her, Mildred. I wish you would take her a shade hat."

"Hanging out clothes!" repeated Mildred, amazed. "What in the world" — She did not wait to finish her sentence, but hastening into the hall seized a broad-rimmed hat hanging there and hurried to the back of the house. Running down the steps, the dancing light quite gone from her clear eyes, she approached her sister.

"What does this mean, Clover?" she exclaimed accusingly.

The elder, already highly colored, now looked uneasy. "You know Mrs. O'Rourke could n't come to-day to do the washing," she answered.

"No, but she can come Wednesday," retorted the younger, placing the hat upon the sunny roughened hair of the head which was decidedly below her own in height.

"Don't stick the hat-pin into me," cried Clover, smiling up into the displeased eyes.

"I don't know but I will. Just look at your fingers, all white and parboiled!"

Clover clasped the offending hands behind her.

"What did you do it for?" asked the young girl severely. "Here I 've been having the most elegant jouncy sail, — it is deliciously rough, — sitting at my ease on a cushion, while you 've been working like this. It is n't a bit fair."

"All right. Help me to hang up the rest of these clothes, and I 'll tell you why I did it."

Mildred snatched up a small blouse waist and a couple of clothespins. What was the use of cooling off on Lake Michigan if one must return to this? How the sun did broil down!

"Was Elsie with you?" asked Clover, as she pinioned the side of an apron to the line.

"Yes, and Frank too. Harry Billings took us all out."

"I 'm afraid that the children will become something of a nuisance down at the boat-house. Of course with you it is different; but the others hang around and look wishful, and of course the young men are too good-natured not to ask them. As for Frankie, he is such an amphibious little animal, we can't help his living down there."

"I only wish we all did live on the shore," grumbled Mildred. "I never shall be resigned to being so far from the lake."

"Oh, it is something to live in the country," rejoined Clover comfortingly, "and Hyde Park is pretty all through."

"Country! Hyde Park!" said Mildred scornfully. "You know it is all Chicago now."

"To be sure; but the annexation is a novelty yet, so no wonder I had forgotten. However, what's in a name?"

"Not much, perhaps," said Mildred, tired of reaching up in the hot sun, and inclined to be pessimistic, "but since we have moved into the middle of this dingy old block, we had better stop talking about living in the country. You have n't told me yet why you took this last caprice. We can't afford to go away and have a change in summer, I understand that; but surely there is a difference between stark and staring mad. There are more sensible forms of recreation than to do a family washing on an August day."

"I have n't done the biggest, hardest pieces, you see," said Clover gently. "There, this is the last. Now let us go over under our tree and talk a bit while we cool off." She turned toward the house and sent a reassuring kiss toward the figure seated in the window, and made a dumb show of applauding her own performance, smiling gayly as she clapped her hands.

"Sit down, Milly," she said, when they had reached the shade of the one tree their yard boasted; but as soon as they were seated, the elder girl fell silent, and clasping her hands behind her head looked up through the foliage of the ragged oak, slowly dying as all its brothers and sisters do in this region, pining for the old prairie isolation.

Mildred fanned herself with her hat, and regarded her sister half crossly, half curiously.

"I hate to talk over bothers with you, Milly," said the latter at last; "but I do have a lot of bothers lately."

Mildred wondered if it were imagination that she saw tears gather in the other's eyes. If they were tears, they were well trained to obedience. Clover sank still farther back and lay upon the grass, and any moisture that had crept forth retreated to its source.

"Is mother any worse?" Mildred asked in a hushed voice.

"No; although she is no better, and any suffering she may endure is the hardest trial we can have to bear. Other perplexities are trying in proportion as they have relation to her, and all our perplexities must, in the end, bear upon her. How to conceal them is the study."

"What have you to conceal? What?" asked Mildred quickly, her large, childlike eyes full of wonder. "Mother knows, she has to, that we barely make both ends meet, and she thinks you are a perfect wonder, the way you manage. What is it, Clover? Is it Frank's education you are worrying about again? Goodness! Don't tell me you did the washing to save up money for that?" The speaker's eyes widened with surprise and disapproval.

Clover shook her head and smiled faintly.

"I 've noticed lately that you are n't half so jolly as you used to be."

Clover sat up with such suddenness as to make

Mildred start. "Has mother noticed it?" she demanded.

"No, not that I know of. You need n't look so tragical. I only mean you are ever so much more thoughtful and old-womanish just lately than you used to be. I 'm sure I don't see why you should let yourself be bothered if we 're all willing to live right down at the bottom of everything, and I don't make any fuss about wearing the same dress to school until the girls must think I 've grown into it."

"You have been good, Milly, just as good as you can be" —

"Pshaw, I 'm nothing to what you are for goodness. We all have to feel the pinch of poverty together," said Mildred with some grandiloquence; "and in a place like Hyde Park it is easier to bear than it might be in some other places. All the old settlers know what father was, and that his honor was n't lost when the money was. Everybody we really care for has been friendly to us since he died. Just think, it is nine years now, and we do manage to have some good times," finished the girl, quite heroically she thought, since there were such a number of joys that she yearned for and had to behold hopelessly in the possession of her more fortunate companions. "Come now," she added insistently, "you are still guilty of that washing and not a word said to excuse yourself."

"Milly," — the older girl looked into her sister's eyes with an expression full of loving trouble, —

"I hate to tell you, but Uncle Adolph's allowance has n't come this month."

"It is a little late, that is all," said Mildred, but her face fell and her heart began to beat unpleasantly.

"No," very sadly, "he has written mother that it will not come any more. Fortunately I opened the letter as usual, and I have not shown it to mother. She thinks it is only delayed."

"But he owed the money to father," said Mildred vehemently. "It was not charity to us, it was a debt."

"Yes, but he simply says that on account of losses he will not be able to let us have any more money, and we cannot force him."

"Mr. Van Tassel could. Have you told him? He is so very kind to us."

"Yes, he is very kind; but there is nothing he could do about this."

"What shall we do?" asked Mildred blankly.

"That is what I have been asking myself for days past."

"That is why you did the washing!" said the younger slowly and with awe, as though this thought did indeed bring home a realizing sense of the situation. "We are awfully — miserably poor," she added in a panic.

"Hush! Not so loud," warned her sister.

"I shall have to leave school and help you do the housework, and Frank can never have any education at all," declared Mildred despairingly.

"He will have to get a position in some store as a cash boy. Mr. Van Tassel will probably help him that much," she finished dismally.

"Hush! Don't keep bringing Mr. Van Tassel into it," said Clover nervously. "I can't bear the thought of begging anybody for anything, even influence."

"Then you have thought of something," exclaimed Mildred eagerly.

"No, I have n't, I have n't," rejoined the other hastily. "Oh, Milly, forgive me." Her tone and gesture as she put one hand to her face and quickly extended the other to her sister touched the latter with great surprise. Mildred took the hand and squeezed it between her own.

"Forgive you, you old darling," she said, tears springing to her eyes. "What for, I wonder? Because you have three children to bring up and work for when you are only twenty? or because you, the prettiest girl in Hyde Park, have wizzled up all your poor fingers washing for us? What is it? Oh, Clover dear!"

For Clover was crying in a hasty, furtive fashion, stifling her sobs, and drying her eyes with light touches, fearing to make the lids redder.

"Because I could n't keep it from you, Milly. You see it does n't do any good for me to bother you except to relieve me a little."

"And is n't that something?" with anxious affection. "Why, you make me as vain as a peacock. I did n't know I counted a bit. I thought

you had to have somebody old, like mother or Mr. Van Tassel, to get any comfort out of them."

"Now of course you feel as I do, Mildred," said the older sister, her quick self-control regained. "Nothing is any matter but to keep this from mother."

"Well, I don't see how we're going to do it for any length of time."

Clover bit her lip. "But as long as we can, we will."

"Of course. Why, poor mother would be crushed!" Then with a change of tone, "Here she comes this minute, Clover Bryant!"

"And my eyes are so red!"

"Better not come out here, mother dear," cried Mildred, rising precipitately and advancing to meet her. "The — the clothes are so damp, you'll — you'll take cold; and the sun is so hot, you'll be — be" —

The mother, with her delicate face smiling beneath the prematurely white hair, placed her arm around the tall girl as she met her, and together they advanced, Mildred most reluctantly, to where Clover sat smiling and striving to look indifferent.

"Have you come out to hear the jays scold?" asked the latter. "There is one up there now. Let me hang the hammock for you." She sprang to her feet.

Mrs. Bryant, without relinquishing her hold on Mildred, put the other arm around her eldest daughter.

Clover flushed violently. There was a look in her mother's loving eyes, the hint of a smile on her lips, which the girl recognized. It was a certain exalted expression of the dear lined face which her children had seen before, and it always meant rising to an emergency. The girl's heart contracted painfully.

The wet clothing on the lines flapped spasmodically behind the trio. Unsteady board fences enclosed the narrow heated area. The poverty-stricken tree stretched its gaunt, ill-clothed arms aloft, and the blue-jay's harsh, jeering note added one more petty discomfort to the surroundings.

"My dear little girls," said the gentle voice with unusual tenderness.

The sisters only regarded their mother in an apprehensive silence.

"I went to your room for something, Clover, and I found my letter from Uncle Adolph. I have just been reading it. Don't regret it. I had to know."

CHAPTER III.

A MORNING DRIVE.

In a city like Chicago, where events occur with phenomenal rapidity, two or three years make great changes in a neighborhood. Hyde Park, which long hung back like a rebellious child loath to yield its independence, had at last placed its reluctant hand in that of the mother city; but with the suburb's growing population there had already come a new state of affairs. It was no longer the case that everybody in Hyde Park knew everybody else. Those families who made homes there when but two trains ran daily to and from town, felt, on the rare and rarer occasions of meeting one another in a stranger crowd, the drawing of a tie tender as that of kinship.

Mrs. Bryant belonged to this pioneer set, and so did Mr. Van Tassel. To those residents who had danced with them "long before the fire" at the parties in the old Hyde Park hotel, this was reason sufficient why the wealthy widower should manifest a continued interest in the friend of his young manhood and her fatherless children. Those long-finished polkas in the long-destroyed hostelry on the lake shore, where scattered neighbors once met with the unconventional jollity of

family reunion, had left behind them a green memory in some hearts.

Florence Badger had been a fair little bud at those gatherings, and of course Richard Van Tassel, her gay young partner, was not likely to forget either her or his chum, Lewis Bryant, whom she afterward married. The children of the two families had gone to school together and carried the intimacy on to the next generation; and when Mr. Van Tassel's wife and daughter had been taken from him, more potent to comfort than any other soul had been the gentle invalid, the friend of his youth, whose lines for many years had fallen in hard places.

So, small wonder that the fine house on the lake shore and the shabby home on the back street had kept up an interchange of civilities. These had been chiefly carried on by the young people until Jack had gone to college. After that it was to the Bryants that Richard Van Tassel liked best to carry his boy's letters, and talk over his haps and mishaps, secure of sympathy.

Of late he had not been blind to the fact that the shabby home was growing shabbier, but it was not an easy matter to bestow gifts here. This very spring he had remarked that Clover's eyes looked too large, and that they rested with greater anxiety on her feeble mother. He had even hinted to Mrs. Bryant a trip up into Wisconsin or across the lake; but she had parried the potential offer with gentle firmness.

Many a drive around the parks and boulevards did the invalid take with her daughters in the glistening Van Tassel equipage, greatly to the wonder of certain Hyde Parkers whose experience did not date back to "before the fire."

The owner of the horses was away, that they knew. Jack Van Tassel graduated from Harvard this June, and his father had gone East for the great occasion. Now it was early August, and he had not returned. "It was so lovely of him," many said, "to give poor people like the Bryants the use of his carriage while he was away. A real charity. Not many men would be so thoughtful."

These neighbors wondered if the freedom of the fine equipage extended to the freedom of the house; but this they could not discover, for the Bryants were not talkers unless surrounded by old friends. Hard experience had taught even the young people reserve. Nevertheless it might have been a gratification to these curious ones to know that the Bryants had never taken liberties at the Van Tassel mansion. It had even been interdicted always to the girls by their careful mother to accept a general invitation to sit on the piazzas and rest, when they came home from the sailing expeditions their souls loved.

The house was fascinatingly near the water, and the level lawns about it cool with a fine mossy greenness. The hammocks and rocking chairs on the spacious piazzas gave alluring invitations to recline and study the ever-changing coloring of the

illimitable fresh-water sea; and the elm-trees — not even on the boulevards were there such respectable elm-trees as had here been coaxed to endure the harshness of bleak lake-winds.

This being the case, it was hard, Clover and Mildred used to think, and their little sister thought so still, that unless Jack happened to be on hand to give them a specific invitation, they must pass this unused luxury by, and trudge around the corner up the sunny main street, and so on to the sandy roughness of the unpaved avenue they called home. Still they never thought of rebelling. The rule was as fixed as those of the Medes and Persians, and it must be a right one because mother made it.

On the very day that Clover, hard pressed by thoughts that ran in a discouraging circle, disfigured her pretty hands by doing the family washing, Mr. Van Tassel returned to Chicago.

On the following morning the sun was reflected brightly from the wheels of his buggy as he drove a pair of well-groomed horses to the Bryant house. Elsie Bryant, a girl of fourteen, saw him as he drew up before the wooden walk. With a little exclamation of delight she ran down the flight of steps to greet him.

Mr. Van Tassel gathered the reins into one hand and reached the other down to the child.

"How are you all, Elsie? Mother about the same? Oh, I 'm sorry for the headache. Is Clover at home? Will you tell her I have a business errand to do this morning, and very much want her com-

pany on my drive? Tell her she must indulge me. I can't let her off. I'll come in later to see Mrs. Bryant."

"Lucky Clover," thought Elsie as she ran obediently up the steps. "I just wish he had asked me."

And lucky Clover thought herself when she received the message. She was so tired of her own depressing thoughts! The fresh air and the sight of the kind familiar face would do her good.

When Mr. Van Tassel saw her run down the steps in her blue gown a few minutes later, he descended from the buggy with middle-aged deliberation.

"Welcome back," said Clover, trying to speak cheerily. It seemed to her that misfortune must have set an ugly visible mark upon her.

"Thank you for that. Thank you for coming," said Mr. Van Tassel, looking at her as their hands met as though he saw nothing unlovely. He assisted her into the buggy, and following, started the horses.

"Did Jack come with you?"

"No. I thought that I might find him here. He expected to arrive about now."

"Proud, happy Jack, I suppose," said the girl smiling.

"Rather a homesick Jack I fear he will be for a little while, unless he has recovered already. You know the young man has a way of recovering from depression."

"Jack and depression! What an impossible

connection of ideas," laughed Clover. It seemed wonderful to herself that she could laugh. It was so long since she had. Three days is an interminable term of misery when one is twenty. They were bowling swiftly along Drexel Boulevard, beside the rich foliage and flower-beds of the landscape gardener; the air was clear and cool, and driving was quite a different thing when Mr. Van Tassel held the reins in this light vehicle, from the same exercise by favor of his solemn coachman, in the heavy and gorgeous carriage driven at a rate suited to Mrs. Bryant's sensitive condition.

Up Oakwood to Michigan Boulevard they sped, and soon the buggy stopped before one of the splendid stone mansions on that avenue.

"I shall be but one minute," said Mr. Van Tassel as he dismounted, and he kept his word. When Clover saw the brevity of the message given to the servant who answered his ring at the door, a faint wonder passed through her mind that Mr. Van Tassel had thought fit to bring it in person.

She was not inclined to quarrel with the fact, however, and when her escort returned and the heads of the spirited horses were turned back to the south, she inhaled a long breath of satisfaction.

"You have not found pleasanter weather than this where you have been, I am sure," she said.

"No," he answered, "nor pleasanter circumstances. I have thought of you a good many times though, Clover, and wished you might be with me."

He turned and looked into her eyes as he spoke, the innocent blue eyes that returned his gaze fully. Her pretty lips parted in her interest. "That was very good of you," she said sincerely. "I would like to go to every interesting place, so I am sure I should have echoed your wish. Where was it? At the seashore?"

"A part of the time, — yes."

"I wonder if I shall ever go East," exclaimed the girl with a sigh. "New York, Boston, Philadelphia, I should like them to be something beside names to me, — but what an idea!" She broke off with a short laugh. Her thoughts had indeed, like unruly steeds, kicked over the traces by which they had been harnessed to carry her by a safe road out of a perplexing labyrinth.

"Not an absurd idea at all," said her companion quietly.

"Our lake looks very like the ocean, I suppose," she continued, after an involuntary sigh.

"Not very much. I don't say it is not as beautiful," replied Mr. Van Tassel loyally, "but the electric blues and translucent greens of Lake Michigan have little in common with the deep, strong indigo, or bottle-green, of old Ocean. There is as much variance in their complexions as in their voices; as much difference between the sweep of the fresh-water surf and the boom of the ocean's tide, as between the tones of a tenor and a bass voice."

"But, Mr. Van Tassel, think of the lake

storms!" returned Clover, her Chicago spirit piqued. "I've stood on the lake shore many a time when I could lean my full weight against the wind and be supported; and how does the boom of the breakers, hammering the piers on those nights, sound at your house?"

Mr. Van Tassel smiled. "Well," he answered, "we will say like a *tenore robusto* in full force. But there again comes in the difference in disposition. When Lake Michigan becomes angry, it flies into a white rage in a few minutes, and as soon as the spell is over calms down into comparative placidity; while the ocean, slow to wrath, relaxes but gradually, storming on with splendid fury under a dazzling sun."

"A difference greatly in favor of the lake, I should say," returned Clover.

"Ah, but think of the terrors of Michigan's caprices. Smiling, even seeming to dream in a happy reverie one minute, rocking its little sailboats softly on its breast like a gentle mother, all at once with appalling suddenness it flies into a passion, and while the fit is on works havoc that inflicts long years of misery, though the very next hour may find it dimpling again in gay carelessness of calamity. Not so with the ocean. The sailor relies on its steady winds, and the honest signs it hangs in the heavens for all to read, giving fair warning of approaching danger."

"Why, Mr. Van Tassel! As if you did n't know that our sky hangs out signs too, only, as

Jack says, one must be brought up right on the lake to understand them. I had no idea you were such a poet, and so disloyal."

As the girl made her warm protest, her companion threw back his head and gave the hearty laugh that his friends liked to hear.

They had sped down Grand Boulevard, through Washington Park, and now entered the Midway Plaisance.

What that name suggested to Chicagoans up to a short time ago was the loneliest, most rural drive of their park system. It even wound through the woods at one point, making the refreshing variety of a curve in the city of straight lines.

On this morning of the summer of '89, when Mr. Van Tassel's horses turned into the broad avenue, their hoofs rang out in unbroken stillness. Not another vehicle or human being was in sight. Birds glided noiselessly among the trees that lined each side of the driveway. Grassy fields stretched away in level, tranquil monotony in all directions. It was the Midway Plaisance; but with no dull rhythmic beat of drum to be the first greeting of each new arrival, no shadowing forth of the scenes in the near future, when this unknown plot of ground should become the rendezvous and rallying place of the civilized, half-civilized, and savage nations of the earth.

It was the Midway Plaisance. What's in a name? The words now signify to millions a

babel of tongues, a baffling concatenation of noises and odors, a dizzying throng of sensations and emotions, a wondrous collection of novel sights. Yet, a little while ago it was the Midway Plaisance, and Richard Van Tassel chose to drive through it with this young girl because he wished for solitude, and he could find no more secluded and unfrequented spot.

"You must be introduced to the charms of the sea before you decide on the question of my loyalty," he said.

"That will never be, I fear," she answered soberly.

"Never is a long time. Hope for the best," said her companion cheerily.

"I do try to, but I have n't Jack's cork-like disposition." A sadness had crept into the girl's tone in spite of herself.

"She is thinking of Mrs. Breckinridge's invitation," decided Van Tassel.

"Your day will come. Every man and woman has his opportunity," he suggested.

"I hope you are right," answered Clover rather dispiritedly.

Her companion looked around at her tenderly, but her large eyes were gazing between the horses' heads. "My poor little girl," he said, and at his tone Clover glanced at him in surprise. "Is the mother not so well?" he asked. "Something depresses you."

"I do not think she is worse," answered the

girl slowly, but her eyes moistened, and she looked away.

"I understand. It is hard for you to be the head of the family. You will grow old before your time."

Clover became afraid that she should cry. She looked resolutely at the antics of a gopher on the fence.

"I have been growing young ever since we started," she answered lightly at last. "I did feel haggard with age early this morning."

She might have added, and at every hour of the night; for her novel problems would not let her sleep.

"I hope you mean to tell me your troubles always," said Mr. Van Tassel.

"That is very good of you," returned the girl, turning her head and giving her companion a faint April smile, "and very tempting too. Even though I am nearly certain that you cannot help me, I am weak enough to wish to talk to you of what I must repress at home."

"I am glad to hear that," returned the other gravely, "gladder than I can express."

So Clover told him of her uncle's debt to Mr. Bryant, of the small allowance he had consequently made her mother, and of the fact of its cessation; and while she still talked, their swift horses left the Midway Plaisance and entered Jackson Park, quiet and refreshing at this hour of the morning. The broad green field in its centre was studded with

haystacks whose perfume filled the air. Robins, thrushes, and catbirds lurked in the quiet groves, and swans sailed majestically on the lakelets where soon the Eskimo canoes would be equally at home.

Adjoining the field of new-mown hay, ducks paddled along the still green banks of another sheet of water, as contentedly as later in the same spot their brothers would swim in the shadow of the white columns of a treasure-house of painting and sculpture.

Mr. Van Tassel drove his horses through the site of future State buildings, down past the pavilion which afterward the people of Iowa beautified with their ingenious decorations. Here, close to its gray stones, he drew rein, and watched with his companion the gentle waves break upon the sea wall.

Clover's recital had drawn to a close, and now that it was over she became for the first time embarrassed in the silence that followed, and doubtful of her own wisdom in having accepted the relief of speech. Her companion was her mother's best and oldest friend. He had urged her to confide in him. His present silence was doubtless owing to a deep consideration as to how he might be helpful to her; but he was a rich man. Clover had not thought of that till now. Her only hope, so far as her vague thoughts were formulated, had been that he might communicate with Uncle Adolph more effectively than she herself. Her cheeks grew slowly, richly crimson. He turned, and she dreaded

what he might be going to say. When her timid eyes found his kind gaze, he extended his hand to her.

"Do you trust me entirely, Clover?" he asked.

She was mystified, but as he evidently wished for her hand she placed it in his.

"Yes, I — I" — she began incoherently, possessed by the suspicion that she had been indelicate, and torn between the keen feeling of her mother's needs and her repugnance to receiving a gift she might seem to have requested.

"Don't be afraid, dear," he continued very kindly and quietly. "If we are both honest, we shall not hurt each other. You have been frank. Now it is my turn."

CHAPTER IV.

CLOVER'S ANNOUNCEMENT.

THE next day Jack Van Tassel came home. The first warning the Bryants had of his arrival was in hearing the familiar whistle of a scrap from Carmen, which was Jack's particular call.

Only Clover and her mother were at home, Mildred having chaperoned the younger children to a lawn party in the neighborhood.

"It is Jack!" cried Clover before the footstep had reached the steps. She looked hopefully at her mother, who returned the significant gaze.

"He would n't whistle," continued the girl with soft eagerness, "if he were n't — if he were n't the same old Jack."

"I hardly feel equal to seeing him to-day," said Mrs. Bryant tremulously.

"You shall not, dear," was the hurried response, as Clover ran downstairs from her mother's room where they had been sitting. She threw open the house door.

"Clover herself," exclaimed the visitor, laughing with pleasure, and wringing her offered hand with painful cordiality.

"I 'm glad you 've come at last," she answered; "and you don't look sorry."

"Not a bit of it," was the breezy answer. "Where are Mrs. Bryant and Mildred, and the small fry? I want to see everybody."

"The girls and Frank will be inconsolable to miss your first call, but they 've gone to a children's party; and mother, I am sorry to say, is n't able to see any one to-day." While the girl spoke, her eyes alternately met Jack's with a sort of wistful gladness, and then fell away. Her face expressed the relief she felt to be thus standing and talking in friendly, easy fashion with her old schoolmate.

"But come in and sit down," she added. "You did not come home at Christmas, so we have a whole year's talking to do."

"Let us talk in the boat, Clover. Sorry Mrs. Bryant is n't well. I 'll call again when she can see me. It is just right for a sail. Don't you want to come?"

"Yes, indeed," returned the girl heartily. "I have had only one sail this summer. Let me go and get my hat, and say good-by to mother."

She ran upstairs and presently returned. Not a trace of yesterday's care appeared in her countenance as the two started out gayly on the road they had often traveled together.

Hyde Park still bore traces of being a country village. The young people walked through fields of sweet clover and goldenrod, where now massive hotels and blocks of granite and glass uprear. Chatting and laughing, they hastened on toward the boat-house.

"It is pleasant to be back, I declare," said Jack heartily, looking with affection over the billowy water, striped with greens and blues, which had been his boyhood's playground. "Father says old friends are best, and I believe he is right."

"Is he coming with us, this afternoon?" asked Clover half shyly.

"Why no," replied her companion, looking at her with undisguised astonishment. "You don't mean to say father has developed a taste for sailing while I have been off at the seat of learning?"

"He always liked it very well, did n't he?"

"Why, I believe he always preferred driving. I told Michael to put the Flirt in the water. Yes, there she is. Now for an old timer, Clover; the wind is superb."

The girl followed the speaker out upon the pier, and, resting her hand lightly in the one he offered, stepped into the boat. Jack followed, and they moved slowly along the little harbor and out through the narrow opening between pier and breakwater, which has ushered so many boating parties into the joys of a brisk voyage, and will do so no more forever.

Jack set the sail, and they began to move swiftly southward. The breeze was strong, and had already raised waves over which the boat sprang, striking a billow before she cut it, with a splash which echoed in the heart with a thousand invigorating memories. It was going to be what Mildred called a "jouncy" sail, and Clover, lean-

ing back amid the boat's cushions, would have been supremely content could her mind have been set at rest upon one point.

Jack, unconscious of her reservation, bared his head and, holding the tiller with one hand, waved the other toward his companion. "Now I am at home," he declared.

Clover smiled and nodded in silence. She regarded him with less complacence than she had felt half an hour before. It was passing strange to feel a little shy and uncomfortable as she looked at Jack, — not to be able to chaff him concerning the little mustache that was a new acquisition, and which scarcely shaded his mouth.

The Flirt's white wings bore them past the dark pines on the shore, past the sea-wall of the pleasant park, and the canal which fed its little lakelets. Then on, past sandy beach and wild wood where the children picked flowers in early summer, past sloughs where adventurous boys skated in winter, — a deserted, unpromising, monotonously level bit of country, surely, to be chosen as a cynosure for the eyes of all nations; to be destined to become "the dazzling focus of a world's activity."

Clover, as she gazed, saw only her old playground. No vision came to her of a white city, lovely and unsubstantial as though fashioned from the clouds of heaven, and holy because the offering of the best of men's hearts and brains. No such foreshadowing came to blot out and lift her above

her personal hopes and fears. She was recalled from absently viewing the landscape by Jack's cheery voice.

"Shall we put about?" he asked.

"Yes, we might as well," she replied, and as she lowered her head the boom swung over.

"I hope you won't get wet," he continued apologetically, for the spray was flying high and higher. "This wind is growing to be too much of a good thing. You must excuse my preoccupation, but I'm trying not to let you be drenched."

"Oh, never mind me," replied Clover. "You know you always said I was almost as good as a boy. I'm not going to lose my reputation on account of a few pints of water, I assure you."

"If I had only put in a reef," said Jack regretfully, "and you had your waterproof."

But the lake was growing boisterous and the facts remained that they had neither reef nor waterproof.

"I suppose we shall have to go in, but this is fine, Clover."

"Indeed it is; and does it really bring you to the conclusion that there is no place like home? I am interested, for you see I don't know any place but home."

"Is that a fact?" Van Tassel glanced at his companion with a recollection of what his father had told him of her relinquished European trip.

"Yes, I am narrow to the last degree. I have never been out of my native State."

Jack eyed the girl with admiring compassion.

"You 've never even seen a hill, Clover."

"Never, — excepting the one in Lincoln Park."

Jack laughed. "Which was carted there in wagons," he added.

"The things I 've never done, and never seen, would fill a large volume," went on the girl, her soft hair, golden in the sunlight, blowing into a halo around her forehead, as she leaned on her elbow among the cushions; "but then I 'm not sure I should n't be as homesick, if I went away, as May Frisbie was last summer. Do you remember, while she was in Switzerland, she wrote home: 'For real scenery give me Illinois!' Ah, here is some Lake Michigan!" for a dancing noisy wave had leaped above the gunwale, a few spoonfuls vaulting saucily into the girl's lap.

"Pardon me, Clover. It is too bad; but we will be inside in a minute. Sorry we had to be cut short in our career."

"Never mind, we 've sailed while we sailed, — not dawdled along."

"And you will come with me again soon, I hope."

White-crested billows pursued them to the narrow opening in the breakwater, as, wind-buffeted, the little craft entered the harbor.

When they landed, Jack left the boat-house janitor to take down his sails, Clover put on her hat, and they walked up to the road together.

"All this time and not a word of congratula-

tion," began Jack gayly, as they started toward home.

Clover met his eyes with a quick, glad turn of her head, relieved from the suspicion that had been filling her with apprehension; and impulsively she put out her hand.

Her companion clasped it. "Well, better late than never," he said.

"I am so glad!" she returned, low and excitedly, "I was afraid you didn't know it, — that perhaps your father hadn't told you of our engagement."

"What! You engaged, Clover?" returned Jack in great astonishment, pausing in his walk. "Why, of course I didn't know it." He shook her passive hand again, and started on. "I haven't had a chance for any talk with father yet, for when I dropped in at the office, this morning, he had some old duffer with him. I only meant just now to fish for congratulations for myself, that my grind is over. I've been receiving a lot of them lately, you know. Excuse the egotism. Now I understand why you have seemed to have something on your mind this afternoon. I do congratulate him most heartily, whoever he is. He's a happy man. Do I know him?"

Jack saw his companion turn pale to her lips, as he asked the question, and her eyes amazed him by their piteous wistfulness as she raised them to his.

"I have made a great — a great mistake to

speak," she returned faintly, "but I thought from what you said — and I hoped so you would not object! He is," eagerly, "oh, he *is* happy, Jack. It is your father."

The young man stared blankly into the white face, then his own turned red. Through all the tan of seashore sun she could see the color rise, and as the affectionate interest that had shone from his expressive eyes gave place to a violent revulsion of feeling, it seemed to her that a physical coldness crept around her heart.

"This is news to me," he said in a voice she did not know. "I — I would n't have believed it of you, Clover."

The girl winced. The contempt of her old playfellow was the severest blow she had ever had to bear. She walked fast under the stress of feeling, and her companion kept pace with her.

"This is why she refused the Breckinridge invitation," thought Van Tassel hotly. "My poor, generous, blind father."

They kept silence for half a block, then Clover spoke again, recovered calmness in her pale face.

"Your father said that if we were honest with each other, we should not do wrong," she said clearly, "and we have been very honest. He loves me. He wants to take all my cares upon himself. Nearly all our means of subsistence has recently been taken from us, and I was bewildered and helpless when Mr. Van Tassel came to me with his love and generosity."

"An irresistible temptation, no doubt," replied Jack dryly.

"It *was* a great temptation. I have the future of three children in my care, with all my inexperience; but the keenest pang in my helplessness was mother's condition."

"You *are* honest; if you were equally so with my father, I do not wonder it occurred to his great heart to do as he has done."

The hot blood flew to Clover's cheeks. "You are wrong to insult me," she said, controlling herself with heroic effort, for her hurt youth longed to seek relief in flight instead of waiting to parley. "You will soon know that Mr. Van Tassel loves me; and — and" — suddenly turning suppliant, "when he told me so, and represented all that he could do for me if I would consent to marry him, why should I have refused? I did not know it would make you so angry, Jack, and," with eager explanation, "I do not care for anybody."

Her companion gave a short laugh. "A nice lookout for my father," he said curtly.

"You will not understand — you will not approve!" she said passionately, in a low voice that began to tremble. They were nearing her home now. "It is hard for you; perhaps it is wrong to you. So far as my own happiness goes, I could give it all up for your sake, for your rights are to be considered. Ah, there is mother in the window. She sees you, Jack!"

The white head behind the window-pane inclined, and Van Tassel mechanically lifted his hat.

"Do you see the peaceful look in her face?" went on the girl's unsteady voice. "She has only looked like that since yesterday. No," with new strength, and no supplication in her manner as she unconsciously drew herself up, "I will not waver. Say what you please to me. Think what you will of me; I can have but one thought, I must have but one, and that is — mother!"

Van Tassel lifted his hat once more, as to a stranger.

"Not one friendly word?" she asked desperately, her breath coming fast.

"What do you want?" asked the other. "That I should wish you prosperity?"

"You surely do not wish me ill, Jack?"

"You have just declared your intention not to consider me. What can my wishes be to you? My only course is to efface myself," and without another word of farewell Van Tassel bowed, and, turning on his heel, hurried away up the street.

CHAPTER V.

MISS BERRY'S VISITORS.

MISS LOVINA BERRY stood on the stone doorstep of her square, white house early one evening soon after the scene narrated in the last chapter. The elm growing in her yard would have put to shame those so carefully tended in front of the Van Tassel mansion a thousand miles away, and more of the noble trees stood outside the white picket fence and shaded the country road.

The flowers in her carefully weeded garden were homely and wholesome, like her own placid face, as she stood, elbows in her hands, regarding the neighbor who was in the act of departing from her hospitable roof.

"You 're sure 't won't inconvenience you a mite, Loviny?" asked the latter, folding a brown paper parcel beneath her shawl as her anxious upturned face met Miss Berry's benevolent gaze. "You won't need the pattern this week?"

"No, I sha'n't need it this week," answered Lovina pleasantly; then, as the other started off contentedly toward the little white gate, she added in an equable, unvexed undertone: "but if I want it any time within two months I shall have to come after it, that I know. There ain't anybody slack-

er 'n you be, Ann Getchell, from one end o' Pearfield to the other." Miss Berry continued to watch contemplatively the woman whom she had characterized with such passionless severity, and suddenly she saw her stoop.

"Your posies do smell so good, Loviny," Miss Getchell called back. "I s'pose you don't care if I take some old man?"

Miss Berry smiled, and stepping deliberately off the stone advanced toward her guest. "Take any old man you can get, Ann. I would n't lay a straw in your way."

"That 's an old joke, Loviny," returned the other with a sniff, breaking a piece of the feathery stuff with its pungent sweet odor, while her hostess with generous hand gathered the best the garden afforded, and tying the nosegay with a bit of striped grass, bestowed it upon the visitor, who buried her nose in its depths.

"You 're just as much of an old maid as I be, you know," added Miss Getchell with an upward look.

"Just exactly, Ann. I don't know but more; more set in that direction, as it were."

Miss Lovina's lips twitched a little as she rested her arms on the gate after her guest had gone out, but all her neighbors had reason to know that the milk of human kindness became cream in her case, and Ann Getchell had too often benefited by its richness to feel less than content now. Indeed, as she turned a curve in the country road

and hugged closer her brown paper parcel, she soliloquized with much satisfaction: —

"I was n't sure she 'd let me have it. Loviny always does set so much store by what Mis' Page sends her, and that dolman has got a style to it that I hain't seen anywhere else. I can get it out o' my old gray poplin, I 'm next to certain. Them spots don't show hardly at all on the other side — Why, Mr. Gorham!" The spinster started back with a short, shrill screech. "What a turn you did give me! Why," clutching the left side of her dress waist, "I 'm all of a tremble. You riz up so unexpected from behind that rock that I — law! I can't hardly stand up."

The young man who had thus rudely interrupted an absorbing sunset dream looked upon the ostentatiously perturbed speaker with some trouble in his absent gaze.

"Pardon me, Miss Getchell. The evening is so beautiful, I had thrown myself down in the grass there to listen to the thrushes, and that moment happened to decide I must be moving. I did not hear your soft tread approaching."

Over Miss Ann's agitated countenance there stole a gratified expression. This reference to her soft tread had a pleasing sound. It was characteristic of this young man to appear to compliment when no proceeding was further from his thoughts. More worldly-wise and charming women than Miss Getchell had been similarly misled by him. Nature in mischievous mood

had added to his muscular physique the features of a hero of romance, and launched him, a practical joke, upon society.

The little woman tilted her thin head to one side with an arch air, and lifted her sharp-nosed face toward his pensive eyes.

"Ain't it a coincidence I should 'a' met up with you just now? I've got a pattern under my arm this minute that your sister-'n-law sent Loviny Berry. I did n't know as you was in town."

Her companion was anxious to pass on; but sense of duty forbade. He had startled Miss Ann. It would be uncivil to leave her abruptly.

"I have but just arrived. I've come down for a flying visit to Miss Berry."

"Jus' so. I've jus' come from there, as I said. You hain't been down in years, have you?"

"It is a long time for me to stay away from Pearfield. Good"—

"Loviny did n't say a word about expectin' you," said Miss Ann curiously. "Do you still like lawyerin'?"

"Yes, I like it. Good evening, Miss Getchell." He lifted his hat; then as though compunction prompted the act, he advanced a step and shook Miss Ann's limp hand. He was recalling that she had been kind to him in a past when the quality of apples was not material, and the fruit on her gnarly little trees had seemed desirable.

"Good evenin'," she answered. "Come and see me if you 're stayin' long enough."

"Thank you. I return to Boston almost immediately."

The young man pursued his way, relieved to be free again to give all his attention to the soft summer sky where the light was fading; to the bird-notes which were becoming disconnected and dreamy; to the scents which rose gratefully from willows, and the thorny luxuriance of vines that rioted over the stone wall at the roadside.

Miss Berry was still lingering at her gate when he approached the house. She dropped her hands from her elbows and grasped the pickets of the fence at sight of the face under the lifted hat.

"Why, Mr. Gorham!" she exclaimed, and opened the gate, her countenance alight with pleased surprise. "I was just thinkin' about you this minute, as I was standin' here."

"Naturally. I was a coming event, and I cast my shadow before."

The visitor shook the plump offered hand with no abstraction now in his eyes, and his teeth gleamed beneath his mustache. "I 've no doubt I can tell what you were thinking about, too."

"Like enough. I s'pose lawyers know everything. Come into the house," said Miss Lovina hospitably.

"Not yet. It is far too pleasant here. Where is that old settee that used to be under the oriole elm? Why, there it is, of course, only pushed to the other side," and the speaker started for the desired haven.

"Come back, come back, Gorham Page. Don't you wade through the wet grass!" exclaimed Miss Berry imperatively.

Her visitor turned around, laughing. "That sounds natural, Aunt Love," he said.

"Well, perhaps it does," replied the other in half-laughing apology; "but have n't you learned good sense yet? The dew 's a-fallin', and that grass ought to been mowed last week."

"Do you remember when I used to mow it for you?"

"I remember when you used to promise to," rejoined Miss Berry, the corners of her mouth still twitching. "Look here. I ain't goin' under that elm to set with my feet in the water."

"All right," replied Page, succumbing with a sigh, and casting a glance toward the graceful branches of the tallest elm, behind which the new moon glimmered in a primrose sky. "What an evening!" he ejaculated.

"'M; dewy though," returned Miss Berry.

"I do like those old trees," said her guest slowly, continuing to gaze.

"So do the mosquitoes," replied Miss Berry inflexibly. "Come up on to the stoop."

Page, with a smile of amusement, followed his hostess to the piazza, where she ensconced him in one rocking chair, and herself in another.

"Do the orioles still hold possession of that elm?"

"Yes."

"I 'm glad of that. The rest of the world may change, and must; but I 'm jealous of a hair's breadth of change in Pearfield."

"Well, I don't know. The hang-birds squabble a good deal," remarked Miss Lovina impartially.

Her guest laughed again. The fact being that very few things in life moved him to laughter, he was enjoying himself hugely.

"You are too practical; too unsentimental, Aunt Love," he asserted argumentatively.

"Too unsentimental, hey?" responded Miss Berry, folding her hands over the white apron that protected her striped gingham gown. "That 's pretty good from you. What does it mean? Have you repented o' your singular ways, and been fallin' in love?"

"Oh, yes," responded the other, more seriously; then added simply, as though stating an undeniable fact, "I am always falling in love."

"Then why don't you get married?" asked Miss Lovina bluntly. "I have n't heard a thing about you in so long, I did n't know but what you *was* married, only I had n't received any cake. I did n't believe you 'd forget me."

"No," said Page. "If I could be as loyal to any girl as I am to you, Aunt Love, I should certainly ask her if she would have me."

"But if you fall in love?" asked Miss Berry, perplexed.

"The trouble is I don't stay in love," explained Page with simple sincerity. "I can't help forget-

ting about the young lady in a little while. It really makes me blue sometimes. Now this summer at Bar Harbor I met a girl who was remarkably pleasant. Pretty, clever, a good talker. Her tastes and mine coincided. My mind was full of her when I left the place."

"Have you heard from her since?" asked Miss Berry with interest. This certainly sounded encouraging.

"Oh yes. I have sent her candy and flowers and books from time to time," responded Page, beginning to look serious and abstracted.

"Then you write to each other?"

"Yes, oh yes, we do — yes. Come to think of it, though," Page gave a short uncomfortable laugh, "I believe I never answered her last letter. I've forgotten. I must look it up when I get back to town, if I can remember it. Aunt Love," brightening, "are those scalloped cookies still in the tin box?"

"Child! You haven't had any supper!" Miss Berry sprang to her feet with astonishing celerity, her plumpness considered.

The guest also rose. "Yes I have, but I want a cookie."

"Then I'll get it for you."

"No, no; that would spoil everything." Page took his hostess by her plump, comfortable arms and forced her back into her seat.

"There ain't a bit o' light in there," remarked Miss Berry resignedly.

"That was the condition of things when my aim for the cookies used to be most unerring," returned the visitor, disappearing into the house.

He returned shortly, carrying in one hand a cookie which already had lost from its side a generous semicircle, and in the other a round, deep tin box which he placed at an impartial distance between his own chair and Miss Lovina's.

"Those are not my usual cookies," stated the latter, meditatively regarding the box as her guest settled himself with a sigh of content.

Page smiled. "That 's all right," he answered. "You know they never were."

"Now I deny it, Gorham Page," rejoined Miss Berry warmly. "I was never one to make excuses all the time, and you can't say I was; not truthfully you can't."

"These are exactly right, anyway," returned the other calmly. "There never was a cookie outside this house that tasted as good."

"Oh now, that 's silly, Mr. Gorham," returned Miss Berry with a pleased smile.

"No, it is sound sense. I feel old, and tired of things very often. If I could only get hold of one of these at such moments, I should be young again in a minute, with an appetite for everything. If you should some day receive a telegram asking for a cookie, you may know that I need to be rejuvenated, and mail me one at once."

"Have you forgotten my currant wine?" asked Miss Berry radiantly.

"Well, I guess not! But you never let me know where you kept that."

His hostess laughed. "No sir, indeed I did n't. You set where you are, and I 'll fetch it out."

She was as good as her word, and in a short time a little table stood at Page's elbow, and upon it a bottle and two glasses.

"I am sure I 'm a big boy now," he laughed, as he poured the wine, "since you trust me with this. I well remember the half glasses you used to give me as a treat. How many summers did we come here, Aunt Love?"

"Pretty near every year after you was ten years old till you went to college."

A little silence fell between them, for it was that summer before Page's collegiate life began that his mother bade him a last good-by upstairs in this very house, in the low-ceiled chamber where the branches of the oriole elm cast their shadow.

"How 's your cousin Jack? I wonder if he remembers Pearfield too," continued Miss Berry.

"Indeed he does. He graduated from Harvard this year, and of course I attended the Commencement. He asked for you, and I told him I did n't know half as much about you as I ought to; so when your business letter reached me last week, I determined to answer it in person, and I hope you will pardon what was unbusinesslike delay, for I could not arrange to come at once."

"I feel as though I" — Miss Berry was beginning diffidently, when a small dark whirlwind

rattled the tin cake box, jostled the table, and leaped frantically against Miss Lovina's arm, upsetting some drops of wine upon the clean white apron.

"Get out! get down! Your paws are dirty!" she exclaimed, emphasizing her unflattering protests with slaps at the panting, bounding, shaggy terrier, who at last seated himself for an instant on his stump of a tail, before rising to take a minute survey of the visitor's pantaloons.

"Oh, you nuisance!" apostrophized Miss Lovina, wiping up the wine drops with her handkerchief. "He 's been to get the cow with Obed. He goes every night, and he always races home like a mad thing, just as though it had come over him up in the pastur' that p'raps I 'd give him the slip and go off somewheres without him. No sir, don't you touch that cookie box!" for the terrier's eyes were gleaming through the mat of hair, and his mobile nose worked hungrily, first toward Page's hand, and then toward the base of supplies.

"H'm! He evidently knows those cookies, and agrees with my estimate of them," said the young man, breaking a piece and offering it to the dog as he returned alertly from Miss Berry's vigorous push. The creature swallowed the morsel, and at each mouthful Page took thereafter, became convulsed throughout his rough body, then planted his four feet firmly and expectantly, and emitted a little bark. "This *is* an innovation," continued

the guest. "Pearfield does move, it seems, after all."

"Oh, well," sighed Miss Lovina, lifting the cookie box to a safe perch on the table, "it 's none o' my doin'. Since the last season you spent here I have n't made it any reg'lar thing to keep summer boarders; but last year a lady was here with her children, and nurse, and this dog. They had him new for a plaything for the children, and they was too little to like him. He 's the livest thing, Blitzen is, that ever walked, anyway. No, I ain't talkin' to you. Keep down! And he scared the children with his wild ways. The upshot of it was, they all went off and left him on my hands. Mrs. Siddall said it was so much trouble to travel with him that if he bothered me I might give him away to somebody in the village. Humph! That was all very well to say. I 've given him to four folks already."

Page smiled and gave the dog another mouthful. "Wise Blitzen. He knows which side his bread is buttered on," was his comment.

"He would n't stay tied up, nor shut up, no more 'n a witch," continued Miss Berry, "and every time he 'd come back, he looked rougher than the last time; and when he 'd catch sight o' me, he 'd act foolish and actually laugh. It 's a fact. He 'd grin till he showed every tooth in his head. Of course I gave in at last. I had to. He 's a knowin' critter," sighed Miss Lovina; "he knows everything on earth only just that I don't

want him. He 's set out to deny that, and he 'll stick to it."

"He seems to be a fine dog of his kind," said Page.

"Yes. They said he cost a lot o' money," returned Miss Berry, regarding the terrier dubiously. "I did think though, first off, that I should never get to tell quick which was which end of him. He has n't got tail enough to wag, and he 's so rough and queer he 's given me a start many a time barkin' in the direction I did n't expect. What were we talkin' about when Blitzen broke in?"

"I was asking pardon for my delay in responding about your business matter. I told you when I met you at the gate that I knew you were thinking, as you stood there, that it was strange that I should be neglectful of you."

"Well, I was n't. I was wonderin' if I 'd done the right thing to bother you about the matter anyway."

"Decidedly you did. It is a problem I can solve for you with very little trouble, I 'm sure, if you will show me the papers you spoke of. I have robbed the tin box shamefully and the light has gone; supposing we go into the house and talk the matter over. My time in Pearfield is limited. I sail for Germany next Saturday, and I have considerable to do between now and then."

"Well, if you ain't clever to me," said Miss Berry gratefully, as she rose and led the way into the house, while Page followed with the impedi-

menta of box and bottle, and the further embarrassment of Blitzen, who writhed ingeniously about his legs, evidently intending to make clear his adherence to one who could command cake at such an astonishing time and place.

CHAPTER VI.

THE UNEXPECTED GUEST.

Miss Berry's legal question was at last disposed of. Page carefully mapped out a plan of action for her, and explained each detail with painstaking kindness.

"You *are* clever to me, Mr. Gorham," she repeated gratefully, when all was made clear. "Now I want to pay you exactly as any of your clients would," she added, in a business-like tone.

"You can't," he answered, throwing himself back in his chair, "for they don't any of them make such cookies as you do."

"Now please don't joke," she begged, half-laughing. "You 've had the cookies already."

"Of course, just a retaining fee as it were. Blitzen and I want some more before I go to bed."

"But such an obligation," pleaded Miss Berry.

"Such a pleasure, Aunt Love," rejoined her lawyer. "Now, to change the subject, what is Pearfield's opinion about the World's Fair? Where do you think it ought to be held?"

"I don't know enough about the different cities to say," returned Miss Berry. "I see by the papers some o' the Western cities think they have as good a right as anybody. Chicago is after it,

Such an idea! As though folks want to have to traipse way across the country to see the Fair. I don't know much about public questions," continued Miss Lovina, complacently smoothing her apron, "but I know enough to see that there ain't any sense in that notion, and reasonable folks won't listen to it; not but what Chicago 's a good deal of a city, I s'pose."

"Chicagoans have that idea," answered Page, smiling. "I have a friend who recently returned from Europe; and he says that one day in the boat's music-room he found on the table a book purporting to portray only Chicago and its suburbs. There were pictures in it of Niagara Falls and the Yellowstone Park."

"Do tell!" exclaimed Miss Berry, laughing. "Well, where do you want the Fair to be, Mr. Gorham?"

"Oh, I feel as though New York were the proper place. I think it is the general feeling that it would be a risk to trust a matter like that to Chicago. There has been a very clever cartoon published recently in New York, showing our principal cities represented as pretty women standing in a semicircle around Uncle Sam waiting to see which shall receive a bouquet which he holds in his hands labeled 'World's Fair,' — that is, they are all pretty women except Chicago, who is a half-grown, scrawny girl, arrayed in an evening gown covered with a pattern of little pigs. She has huge diamonds blazing in her breast and ears,

her thin arms are bare, and the hands she wildly stretches out to Uncle Sam wear white kid gloves with one button at the wrist. Her mouth is wide open, and she is evidently vociferously demanding the prize, while New York, a beautiful society girl, gazes at her with well-bred scorn. For my own part, I think New York may overdo the nonchalant business, and if she does, the energetic maiden stands a good chance to gain her end."

"How do you suppose your cousin Jack likes to have his city made such game of?" asked Miss Lovina.

"Oh, I fancy Jack has learned by this time to view the Garden City from a Bostonian standpoint. I don't know what his views are on the subject of the Fair. I have seen very little of him the last years."

"You are liable to make up for it in the year to come," said a new voice suddenly.

Blitzen had already run growling toward a window, and now barked furiously as Jack Van Tassel walked into the room and Miss Lovina and her guest sprang to their feet.

"Forgive the intrusion," added the new-comer, in the handshaking that ensued. "I looked through the window and saw you sitting here so comfortably, I thought it a pity to make you the trouble of coming to the door. Aunt Love, how are you? You did n't expect to see me here, Gorham?"

"Where have you dropped from? You were

in Chicago day before yesterday," rejoined his cousin.

"I don't deny it. Thank you, Aunt Love. I used to like this rocking chair when my feet would n't touch the floor as I sat in it. What do I see? If there is n't the cookie box!"

"Yes, and you 're in great luck to come as soon as you have, for I was just meditating another onslaught upon it."

"Well, if you two great boys ain't as bad as you ever were!" exclaimed Miss Berry in high delight, as she hastened to bring forth the currant wine again for the delectation of her new guest.

"Perhaps you will explain yourself," remarked Page curiously, hospitably reaching out the tin box and meanwhile making attempts to hold Blitzen off with his foot; an effort which met the success attendant on similar treatment of quicksilver.

"Why, I 've come to see Aunt Love," responded Jack. "Why should n't I?"

Miss Berry looked at his brilliant, graceful face and figure admiringly. "Why not, indeed?" she said, laughing. "I was always good to you, was n't I, Mr. Jack?"

"Too good. Far too good. I remember everything."

"That is all very well; but why did you bid me a long farewell a week ago, and then turn around and come back again?" persisted Page.

Jack tossed off a glass of wine. "Better than ever!" he exclaimed, sending Miss Berry one of

the caressing, admiring looks which warmed any feminine heart toward which they were directed. Then he turned to his cousin. "Because, my dear Gorham, I have repented of my rejection of your offer, and after I've talked over old times sufficiently with Aunt Love, it is my intention to accompany you to Germany. Do you accept my apology?"

"Good enough," commented Page briefly, but with evident satisfaction. "Your decision must have been sudden, though. What was the matter? Did Chicago grate upon your æsthetic sense in her scramble for the Fair?"

"She is n't scrambling, that I know of. She does n't need to. She 'll get the Fair all right. Any one can see with half an eye that Chicago is the only place for it, — the foreordained place."

Page laughed quietly and skeptically, and there followed one of the arguments of which every American citizen knows the pros and cons.

That night Miss Berry put her unexpected guests into two bedrooms which communicated. When her last good wishes for their comfort had been expressed and good-nights said, the two men looked at each other as they listened to her retreating footsteps.

"Of course," said Page, "if the explanation you gave me downstairs is all you care to say, I 'm satisfied."

The brightness had faded from Van Tassel's face. He looked moody and worn.

"No, I meant to tell you, of course," he answered, seating himself on the side of the bed. "I found when I reached home that father had assumed charge of an orphan asylum, and I thought I should be better off out of the way."

"What do you mean?"

"Exactly what I say. He is going to marry the eldest member, in order to facilitate matters."

"Uncle Richard is going to marry again, and you have quarreled with him?"

Jack shook his head quickly. "I don't quarrel with father," he replied briefly.

Page sat down in a blue chintz armchair by the window and pushed open the blind; then recollecting that one of Aunt Love's last warnings had been not to do so on account of mosquitoes, he closed it again.

"Uncle Richard has been a widower for fifteen years," he said. "He is scarcely over fifty years old. Are n't you unreasonable to resent his marrying?"

Van Tassel, his sombre eyes fixed on the palm-leaves in the ingrain carpet, emitted an inarticulate sound.

"What more appropriate," continued his cousin, "than that he should select a widow, even supposing she has children. He has plenty of money. I can see how it would make you feel sore and change your home feeling at first; but Uncle Richard has such a level head, you may be certain that the lady is such a one as you will like after a time."

Jack gave a short, unmirthful laugh. "The lady has n't any children. What a pity you can't see her! She is a little girl who went to school with me at home; and she has an invalid mother, some younger sisters, and a brother on her hands."

Page raised his heavy eyebrows and gave a soft whistle.

"As they have nothing in the world, they have roped father in."

"That 's bad!" admitted the older man with some sympathetic disgust. "Then you *have* quarreled with Uncle Richard, for of course you attempted to dissuade him."

"Not at all. I arrived home to find the engagement a fixed fact and all the parties satisfied. What was there to be done?"

"You did n't come away without saying anything?"

"No, no. I would n't do that, and I believe that in place of anything else to be proud of, I shall always be proud of having had some self-control in that last interview with father. I knew all the time, hot and angry as I was, that if I said to him what I felt, I should repent of hurting him all my life. He is the noblest man, the best father, that ever lived." The speaker's eyes grew bright, and Page believed it was with moisture.

"I 'm glad to hear you say that," he rejoined heartily. "You are right, I know. Uncle Richard is one man in a thousand, and it would be easy enough to believe that even a young girl

might feel a deep and romantic attachment for him."

Van Tassel shook his head. "You are all off again. Say all you like in praise of father, but" —

"But why be prejudiced?" suggested Page hopefully. "This Miss — Miss" —

"Bryant."

"Why should you, on the circumstantial evidence of her family's need, decide that she is only mercenary? Perhaps she loves" —

"And perhaps she does n't," interrupted Jack impatiently. "She says she does n't."

"What?"

"Yes, Clover is a very honest girl, and she was good enough to inform me of the neutral state of her affections."

"Well, well! I must say Uncle Richard is beginning to puzzle me. He has seen this girl grow up. Is she so irresistibly beautiful?"

"What an idea! No. My father puzzles me too, I assure you, but I must believe he loves her, and in the face of that, Gorham," Van Tassel looked up with strong feeling in face and voice, "that dear old fellow made sure that he would n't be interfering with me before he spoke to her. He came to me just before leaving Cambridge, and asked me if I cared for her. Of course I did n't suspect anything. It seemed only a consistent carrying out of the desire he has always had to anticipate my every wish. He urged nothing,

but persisted gently till he discovered what he was after; and I tell you it touches me — in the light of present circumstances it touches me to think about it. He would have given up his wishes; no one would ever have been allowed to suspect them, had they conflicted with mine." The speaker rose, crossed the room, and stood with his back to his cousin, while he regarded the antlered cows in a framed sampler executed by Miss Lovina's mother.

"No wonder you are glad that you said nothing offensive at parting," remarked Page.

"Yes," replied Jack, turning back. "I have been in twenty different minds since taking the train for Boston, as to whether I do right or wrong to go to Europe now. Very few words passed between father and me about it. I had some hours to think before meeting him, after learning what he had done, and I merely told him that Clover had told me of their engagement. He looked right at me and he understands me pretty well. 'Does it displease you, Jack?' he asked. 'It surprises me, sir,' I answered, 'and it makes me feel that while matters are in the transition state which is coming, I might perhaps as well put in that year abroad you spoke of.' He was silent for a minute, and I knew that, try as I might, I could n't mislead him much as to my feelings, so I braced up and spoke as naturally as I could, about how deeply I desired his happiness, and said that if my staying at home would conduce to it, I

would stay. He thought a minute more, and then he said as quietly as he always says everything, 'You had better go, Jack.'"

The speaker paid one more visit to the sampler with its angular green trees.

After a minute Page broke the silence: "I believe you have decided wisely. I believe you had better come with me."

CHAPTER VII.

ON THE RAIL.

THE following week the two sailed for Germany; but when home-coming time for Page arrived, his cousin did not accompany him. Mr. Van Tassel had married the month after his son left, and although his affectionate letters held out an invariable welcome, they made it easy for Jack to stay amid the novel scenes which allured him. Gorham Page, therefore, was alone when he reëntered Boston, one day in the following August. The sister-in-law with whom he made his home was, he knew, at the seashore, and after a brief visit to her deserted flat, and a hasty repacking, he took a cab for the Boston and Maine depot.

He was rather late for his train, and he boarded it to find it crowded. Passing from one car to another in vain search for a seat, he descried, standing in an aisle, a tall young girl, who attracted his attention at once, by reason of her superb figure fashionably clothed in plainest black, and the annoyance on her fresh face. She held a satchel in her hand, and was vainly endeavoring to appear indifferent, after a heated appeal to a badgered conductor who had apparently sought relief from a suffering public in deafness.

When Page, who was slightly short-sighted, approached near enough to discern the impatient golden lights in her hazel eyes, and the underlip caught beneath her teeth, he took in the situation, and gave one more searching glance around the crowded day-car; the parlor car he had already discovered to be hopeless.

"This is very uncomfortable," he said, addressing the girl and raising his hat. "I have not quite despaired of finding a seat. Won't you follow me?"

"I have been all through," she answered, but she followed him.

The next car was packed with equal solidity; but Page moved forward, and on the platform was motioned away by a brakeman.

"Back, please. Next car's a sleeper. Takin' it to Portland. No passengers."

"Is it locked?" asked Page, pushing by.

"No, 't ain't locked, but" —

Page interrupted the slow drawl decidedly, and put aside the detaining hand. "Oh, well, people can't stand, you know," and with an encouraging look around at the damsel in distress, who followed him with alacrity, he opened the door of the Pullman, and ushered her into the luxurious empty car.

"Thank you so much," said the girl gratefully, as she took possession of one section and her benefactor seated himself across the way.

One by one a dozen other passengers came in

and availed themselves of this unexpected privilege, and the pessimistic conductor contented himself by collecting fifty cents from each individual.

Page had an eye for beauty, and as his position made it possible to do so undetected, he regarded his neighbor appreciatively. The world is full of pretty girls, thank heaven, but this one was unusual inasmuch as she was built on such large lines as to make approval a matter of taste. Page did approve. He mentally called her a young Juno as he regarded her flat back and fine shoulders, her clear healthy skin and the Cupid's bow of her upper lip. Her thick brown hair was uncrimped and smoothly brushed toward the coil at the back of her head. She was what is called in the parlance of the day a tailor-made girl, and her physique suggested rowing and tennis.

Page thought this, and wished he had an excuse to speak with her. The fact that he had happened to do her a slight favor made this more than usually impossible, so after a while he abandoned his regard of her piquant profile, in favor of the landscape from his own window.

About now the conversation between two men in the section behind this *fin de siècle* maiden became loud enough to take half the car into their confidence. They were discussing the incongruous situation of the World's Fair; for in the previous April Uncle Sam had yielded, and thrown his bouquet to that one of his daughters which, according to the cartoonist, had clamored and importuned

the loudest. The crude, unformed, ill-bred creature now had this treasure in her keeping, and the righteous indignation and despair of those two New Hampshire men filled the car. What could be expected but national disgrace? What was the matter with the powers at Washington that they had not in some way averted such a disaster? A good many people thought it a joke; these gentlemen could see nothing amusing in having our country held up to ridicule.

As the discussion waxed and waned, Page listened to it perforce, at first indifferently, then with more interest as he discovered that it was affecting his fair neighbor. He could see her cheek grow hot, could see that she held herself with greater rigidity. She bit her lip from time to time, and once she moved her head slowly around as if inclined to glance at the noisy talkers; but half way her deep luminous eyes shot their golden lightning straight into Page's, and recovering herself she turned back and looked ahead again.

The sunshine had begun to pour in at her window, and she suddenly seized the blind to pull it down. It fitted tightly after the manner of its kind, and her first effort was not successful. It was probably not a case for assistance, as the young woman looked as though her muscle would be equal to considerable strain, but Page spontaneously left his seat.

"Allow me," he said, and drew the blind down.

The girl thanked him rather severely. Page's

shipboard experience of comparative informality with strangers was fresh upon him. He spoke on the impulse of the moment, feeling sure that the severity was not intended for him.

"Would n't you prefer to change seats with me? Perhaps you would be less annoyed there by conversation as well as sunlight."

"You heard something of it, then," the girl exclaimed; "but I think they have said all the ignorant, stupid things they can think of."

"I saw that the remarks were troubling you," said Page, seating himself opposite in her section. "The Garden City has one champion, I 'm sure."

"Dear, generous Chicago!" ejaculated the girl, and her youthful wrath was very entertaining to her neighbor. "It is the best thing that ever happened to the country that we are to have the Fair. Perhaps," with interest, "you are a Chicagoan?"

Page was obliged to deny this with a novel reluctance which amused him.

The girl gave the slightest toss of her head. "I suppose the Eastern people think we enjoy the prospect of being jostled, and crowded, and having our streets torn up and our city extended, and all our comfort taken away for two years while we live in a perfect Pandemonium. No. We do not enjoy it, but we do it as our duty because we know that we can and shall do it well. It is not best to trust such an enterprise to an old, slow town."

Page regarded the speaker with curiosity and interest. She spoke softly but emphatically in a

contralto voice, and did not look at him, but beyond him. It occurred to her companion that with her superb vitality and unconscious audacity she might be a truer type of the triumphant young city than that shown in the cleverly insulting picture which had so tickled his imagination.

"I see you take a strong interest in the matter," he remarked.

"Yes. My sister's husband has been busy about it from the first; so I have heard much concerning the subject; but then all Chicagoans are interested. It is their way."

The evident pride with which the girl referred to this "way" caused Page to declare meekly, as a means of raising himself in her estimation, that he had relatives in Chicago.

"That will be very pleasant for you in '93," she returned, with a slight smile which made her face bewitching.

"I have been spending the last year with a Chicago cousin in Germany," continued Page. "He has taken a warm interest in every phase of the discussion."

"Naturally," returned the girl; then having relieved her surcharged heart she apparently recollected that she was prolonging an interview with a strange man, and leaning back in her seat she took a copy of "Life" from her satchel. Fine streaks of sunshine sifted across the sheet.

"Won't you accept that shady seat?" asked Page.

"Thank you, no. I am only going as far as R——."

"That is my destination, too. You might as well be comfortable."

The girl looked up again with some interest. "Are you going to R——? Then I shall ask you to be kind enough to direct me to the Ocean House. I am afraid that there has been a misunderstanding, and that Mrs. Page — that the friend whom I am going to visit does not expect me this morning."

The young man regarded her with a new expectancy. "I am going to the Ocean House also, and, by another coincidence, to see a Mrs. Page. She is my sister."

His neighbor returned his gaze at first with surprise, then a demure spirit of mischief danced in her eyes. It had a brief struggle with cautious propriety, but it conquered. Caution usually did make a losing fight in the case of this young lady.

"I wonder if you can be Gorham," she said slowly, and Page flushed to his temples under the fascination of his own name.

"I am," he laughed.

"I know a lot about you," declared the girl quietly, and her companion thought the dip in her upper lip when she smiled the prettiest thing he had ever seen.

"That is unfair," he returned, "for I know absolutely nothing about you."

"Very likely. Your sister only came to Pearfield three weeks ago."

"Pearfield? Have you been at Pearfield? How strange!"

"Oh, it is very simple. My sister's husband was not well, — he was all tired out with the Fair business, and one thing and another, and the doctor frightened him into thinking he must have absolute rest; so he bethought him of this little village and Aunt Love. Of course you know Aunt Love? She is one of your stanchest admirers. I am not at all sure that when you take your hat off I shan't see a little halo clinging to your locks."

"Oh, come now. That is too bad."

"Well, we went there the middle of June, and we have been there ever since. Three weeks ago, as I said, your sister came up — or your sister-in-law, is n't she?"

"Yes, but all the sister I have, so I claim her."

"I should think you would. She is lovely. She and Blitzen have been the bright spots in my summer."

"Oh, of course, Blitzen. I had forgotten him."

"He is delightful. So sympathetic! Our temperaments are just alike."

Page listened with interest. He could imagine the small dog and this young woman in a romp. He could picture her, and he liked to, in a light cambric gown, going at evening with Blitzen up into the pasture to get the cow.

"Aunt Love has given him to me," continued the girl complacently.

Her companion smiled reminiscently.

"What does Blitzen say to the transfer?" he asked.

"I sometimes suspect he does n't know it," she returned seriously. "I mention it to him every day, though. Mr. Van Tassel laughs at me, and says that I need n't expect to take the dog, — that Blitzen thinks I 'm a humbug."

Page was not listening. "Mr. Van Tassel?" he repeated in blank surprise.

"Yes. Did n't I say? Excuse me. He is my sister's husband — and your uncle. I forgot that. The dearest man that ever lived."

Page felt staggered, and confusedly afraid that he should show the shock he felt. His eyes fell. This was one of that obscure family who had "roped Uncle Richard in." Like lightning there flashed across his mind the consideration that beauty had made his uncle weak.

"Yes — ahem" — he stammered, for he feared it might have been long that he had sat there dazed. "I 'm sorry to hear that my uncle is ailing. Jack — his son knows nothing of it."

"No; it is Mr. Van Tassel's wish that his son should not be informed of his indisposition." The girl's reply sounded curiously stilted in contrast to her previous ease of manner. Page blamed himself for the new coldness.

"Just like his unselfishness, is n't it?" he returned cordially. "I can't help thinking how surprised Hilda will be to see me appear with you. She does not know when to expect me."

Mrs. Page was indeed surprised when the train stopped at R——, and she stood on the platform and beheld her brother and her guest leave the car together. She was a vivacious little woman with a trim figure, and keen blue eyes that looked out beneath her sailor hat, full of lively interest in everything and everybody. She pounced upon the pair, and kissed them both with enthusiasm.

"How perfectly delightful!" she exclaimed. "I could n't help worrying a little about you, Miss Bryant." ("Oh yes, Bryant was the name," thought Page.) "I knew you were not familiar with Boston, and although I had given you such detailed directions, I should have been frantic if you had n't come out of the car just when you did. Gorham, how did you happen to find her? Did you go out to Pearfield? How is Uncle Richard, Miss Bryant? There, Gorham, don't let that stage go without us. Not the white one, the yellow. Is there room for three?"

When they were in the stage that was to take them to the hotel, these queries and many more were answered before the long extent of surf came in sight, vividly blue beyond the firm white shore on which a foamy lacework melted.

Mrs. Page ensconced her guest in a pleasant room near her own, and then returned to her own quarters with an impatient hope that her brother would seek her there. She had not long to wait, and she welcomed him eagerly.

"What do you think of my new acquisition?"

she asked, as she gave him a seat that commanded the ocean, and took one near by.

"I was greatly surprised."

"I thought you would be," said Hilda triumphantly; "but what do you think of her? Isn't she handsome?"

"Very," answered Page, looking dreamily out upon the water.

"Haven't you fallen in love with her, you wooden man?"

"Hardly, yet. I suppose I shall, though," he added resignedly.

Mrs. Page laughed so gleefully that he smiled. "It is all the queerest thing," she said with sudden serious zest. "I was belated in every sort of way about getting down here this year, and when I was finally ready it suddenly came over me that Uncle Richard was with Aunt Love in the character of a semi-invalid, and that it would be civil in me to call on him once, as he had come to see me on his way through the city."

"It is odd that Jack hasn't mentioned his father's being at Pearfield, or his not being well. To be sure, I haven't seen Jack since last March, still he would naturally have mentioned it in the few letters I've had from him."

Mrs. Page lifted her finger impressively. "Jack doesn't know one word about his father's illness. Be sure you don't mention it to him."

"Call it fatigue. It isn't illness, is it?"

"Why, Gorham Page, he had a stroke early this spring."

"No! Why, that is too bad. Surely it is wrong to keep it from Jack," said Page with a strong mental uprising of resentment against unknown scheming Bryants. Of course that innocent, inexperienced young creature of the train would have no word in the matter.

"Well, I don't know," returned his sister dubiously. "It was only a warning, the doctors said, and I suppose Uncle Richard thinks he is all right now with care; and there's a wheel within a wheel there, Gorham. Did n't you notice to-day," lowering her voice dramatically, "that I did n't say a word about Jack? Jack is a sore subject." She nodded her head several times by way of emphasis.

"I dare say," returned the other. "The Bryants must have known that he was very much cut up by his father's marriage."

"Oh, they did; or the girls did. The mother never was allowed to know. I became very well acquainted with this child Mildred in the few days I stayed at Pearfield, but she told me nothing. Aunt Love told me the whole story, for Mrs. Van Tassel had confided in her. Aunt Love is perfectly devoted to Uncle Richard's wife."

"Humph!"

"They have been through a great deal in a year. I suppose you heard through Jack, though I knew nothing about it, that Mrs. Van Tassel's little brother and sister took scarlet fever and died in the same week."

"Yes, I knew that. Jack felt it deeply. I am sure he must have written home very kindly about it. It occurred only about a month after the wedding."

"Very likely he did. I don't know. Then Mrs. Bryant grew weaker and weaker through the winter. They took her South, and surrounded her with every luxury, but in April she died."

"No. I did n't know that."

"Yes, she died very peacefully and happily; but she had not been gone a fortnight when Uncle Richard had that stroke."

"What a procession of calamities!"

"I should think so. Well, Aunt Love says the worst part of it is, that Mrs. Van Tassel seems to connect all this misfortune with Jack's anger at her. Something on the old idea of a curse, I suppose."

Page's lip curled slightly under his mustache.

"I saw very little of Mrs. Van Tassel myself," continued his voluble sister. "Uncle Richard's head was very easily tired. He had to keep very quiet, and she was with him constantly. You never saw such devotion."

"No doubt," said Page ambiguously. "I can easily believe that she will not allow him out of her sight. It looks to me as if it were our duty to inform Jack of his father's condition."

"No, no. I saw enough of Uncle Richard to discover his wishes about that. He does not want to have Jack hurried. He does not consider his condition in the least alarming."

Page's face indicated his disapproval. "So Mrs. Van Tassel is to succeed in keeping Jack at a distance," he remarked.

"I don't think it is her doing."

"Of course it is," said Page without heat. "Uncle Richard must know the circumstances."

"He may suspect something, of course," replied Hilda, "but Aunt Love tells me they do not avoid the subject of Jack at all. Mrs. Van Tassel speaks of him with perfect naturalness, whenever necessity demands, and she has never told Uncle Richard of the angry parting that worried her so. He never asked her about it."

"Wise Uncle Richard! He knew better." Page shook his head. "It is a bad business."

His sister demurred. "I do not know that it is such a bad business for Uncle Richard to have gained such a devoted nurse. He needs it now. As for Miss Bryant, I pitied the girl, cooped up there in that lonely, monotonous village, and begged Mrs. Van Tassel to allow her to stay with me a week or two. She consented very willingly, even gladly. I wanted to give people a chance to look at her. I'm a philanthropist. The sight of her will do a weakly person as much good as the sea air; and she was" —

A knock at the door interrupted. Mrs. Page gave her brother a knowing little nod, and when she answered the call, it was her guest who entered. The girl had exchanged her black dress for one all white.

"You told me to come as soon as I was ready," she said, looking from one to the other.

"Yes, I was in haste to have you see my view. Isn't it a fine one?"

Mildred moved to the window, followed by Page's unconscious, openly admiring gaze. He had risen at once upon her entrance and stood, his hands resting on a chair-back, forgiving Mrs. Van Tassel's arts for the moment, in entire approval of her sister's appearance.

Hilda, to whom her brother-in-law's potential love affairs were a constant entertainment, kept his ingenuous face in view, even while her tongue rattled on.

"For a conscientious, well-intentioned man," she had once said to her husband, "Gorham Page can be the most dangerous creature. Any girl receiving such a look as his would believe him deeply smitten. Then he will go on, getting acquainted with her in his way, inquiring into her thoughts and opinions, even probing her hidden feelings, getting at the real woman, as he calls it, and having exchanged theories with her for a while, his mind will go mooning off, perhaps in the test of some new thought she has suggested, while the girl, gradually neglected, is soon as entirely forgotten as last year's fashions. It amounts to unprincipled flirting, and yet he does n't suspect it in the least. He is too modest, really. A queer paradox."

Hilda suddenly finished the description of a

distant lighthouse, and turning, walked straight up to her brother, who was still lost in critical approval of the noble lines and curves of her guest's tall figure.

"But come," she said, smiling with significant sauciness into his face. "We cannot live entirely on the beautiful things we can take in through our eyes. I fancy there is some dinner downstairs somewhere."

"Yes," agreed Page, stirring. He had finished his soup before he realized that there had been any personal intention in her speech.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TELEGRAM.

MRS. PAGE promised herself to keep a sharp lookout in behalf of the young girl of whom she had assumed temporary charge. At the very first of those exclusive walks and sails which she foresaw, she meant to reason with her brother, and indirectly to warn Mildred of his idiosyncrasy. Her guest seemed wonderfully well-poised and self-possessed for a girl of her age. Doubtless she had already become accustomed to admiration; but Gorham's attentions would be of an unusual sort. Mrs. Page meant to keep an eye on him.

She was disappointed, however. The very day following, he mentioned his intention of returning to the city.

"You must have known that I only came down to call on you," he replied to Hilda's expressions of surprise and dismay. "After such a prolonged holiday as I have had, you surely didn't suppose I was going to idle away more time here."

"I think it is very shabby of you," pouted Mrs. Page, with no thought of her own inconsistency. "Miss Bryant and I need you to entertain us while Robert is away. Don't we, Miss Bryant?"

Mildred assented. "It is hard to be deprived

of both Blitzen and Mr. Page," she said feelingly, and her hostess wished she had not appealed to her.

Page regarded his sister thoughtfully. "Shall I send you some books?" he asked. "Miss Bryant said last night that she had not brought any books with her."

"You need n't trouble yourself," returned Hilda quickly. "His first symptom of interest," she noted mentally. "I know you," she added aloud. "The lightest entertainment we could hope for would be Buckle's 'History of Civilization.' No. Leave us if you must; but don't send us any literature!"

So he departed, and Mrs. Page was left to sound his praises instead of his defects, to her friend. After Mildred's saucy speech, she was determined that the girl should appreciate how far above the common run of men this *rara avis* of a brother was; and she rang the changes upon his high principle, his conscientiousness, his unselfishness, until the faint light of ironical amusement in her guest's eyes arrested her.

"I would n't have you think Gorham a prig," she added hastily. "He is the furthest from it."

Mildred's week at the beach slipped quickly and pleasantly away, and then she was recalled to Pearfield by her sister, who wrote that Mr. Van Tassel felt so much stronger that he wished to return home at once.

Mrs. Page received one letter from the girl,

after they reached Chicago, descriptive of the journey, and the parting from Pearfield. Blitzen, she said, they were obliged to leave behind, as on the day of departure he was nowhere to be found. Humiliating as it was to confess it, they all believed he had heard the plans for his removal, and had gone into hiding.

September passed and October was nearly gone, when one morning as he opened his mail in his office, Gorham Page found a letter from his cousin Jack.

It began by responding to some theories and warnings, which Page had recently written him, relative to the unwholesomeness of beer-drinking.

DEAR GORHAM, — Your interesting and instructive letter just received. It has been an unusual length of time on the road, and it was an ill fate that delayed your temperance lecture, and deprived me of that aid to sobriety any longer than was necessary, in view of the rapidity with which I am traveling the downward road. It arrived, however, at a critical period. A friend in the pension, whose besotted fancy could not rise from the miry slough in which intemperance has sunk her, has just made me a philopena present. Instead of bestowing upon me some airy and diverting German philosophy, or fascinating English tract, or an elevating necktie, — instead of finding something which, in the guise of a trifling gift, should have brought to a debauched

young man blessed suggestions of a reformed life and renewed respectability, she presented me a beer mug with a painting of Lohengrin, Swan and Co. on the outside, and a line or two of German words around the rim, having some reference to Parsifal and the Holy Grail!

That of course drives the last nail into my coffin! That puts me beyond the pale of — water! In vain do you exclaim, "Be a man! Have some backbone about you! Be content to look at your new beer mug, without making other use of it. Keep it as bric-a-brac, dry, and always perpendicular! Let its rigid uprightness be also that of your moral character. Resist the dreadful power of this unrighteous alliance of a refined taste for æsthetic pottery with a depraved taste for strong drink!"

Alas, I cannot. How appalling and yet how interesting it is to observe how Fate inclines to kick a fellow when he 's down. Everything conspires against the reform of one who has fallen.

As to my own case, even if I could overcome my craving for liquor, I should still be obliged to go right on drinking my pint of beer at dinner every day, for it seems that the German words around the rim of my mug are not "fast colors;" they come off gradually as I drink; and after long-drawn-out attempts by the other process, I conclude that this is the only way in which I can ever get any German into me, so I must go on to the bitter end. *Bitte sehr!*

I have decided to come home before the New Year. I dread it, as you know, but the plunge into the new family circle must be taken some time, and I want to see my father. I am sure he wants to see me, too, though he does n't say much about it. In a recent letter, he admitted that he had not been very well during the summer. Bless him! I suppose *her* griefs have shaken him very much. Of course I 'm sorry for her, but I can't be resigned to father's having had to shoulder the Bryants' affairs. I tell you I am glad to know he is himself again. His letter made me feel an intolerable distance away. Yes, I shall see him by the New Year, whatever happens.

Page was folding this letter into its envelope, when a telegraph boy entered the office.

"Want an answer?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

So while his clerk signed, the lawyer tore open the message. He started as he read it, and a slow color rose over his face.

Taking a blank he scribbled an address, then added: —

Will be with you to-morrow evening.

GORHAM PAGE.

Making hasty preparations at the office and at home, he barely succeeded in catching the limited train for Chicago. When he was seated in

his section, he drew forth from his pocket the telegram that had startled him, and read it again.

Mr. Van Tassel died suddenly at nine last night. Can you come to us?

MILDRED BRYANT.

"Poor Jack!" thought Page; and the wheels seemed to repeat the words like a refrain. He disliked his own task, but it did not seem strange to him that he had been summoned. Mr. Van Tassel had no near relatives in Chicago. Page had had charge of his legal affairs in Boston. Doubtless his address had been among the dead man's papers, and Mrs. Van Tassel's advisers had suggested that he be sent for.

Page shrank repugnantly from encountering this woman, whom disaster followed so relentlessly. He tried not to think of her. Perhaps it would not be necessary that they should meet at all; yet try as he might, he could not prevent his imagination from picturing the siren, who had succeeded in capturing the honest, cordial, fine-natured man, whose death it was difficult to realize. How would Jack bear it? How would his highly strung affectionate nature stand the strain? This woman who had brazenly told him that she did not love his father had been the one to stand near the latter's deathbed; while the loving heart of the son had been kept at a distance by her machinations.

For Page was now fully convinced that Jack had been deliberately deceived as to his father's condition, and he blamed himself hotly for obeying his sister and refraining from interneddling.

He said to himself that he ought to have talked with Miss Bryant about the matter at R——. The thought of Mildred gave him no pleasure. She was sister to the woman who had robbed Jack, and broken his heart. He felt a sudden conviction of Mrs. Van Tassel's appearance. She was an Amazon; tall, commanding, bold-faced, loud-voiced, with a coarser repetition of her sister's beauty; and involuntarily he shuddered with anticipatory disgust, and wished the next few days well over.

But this was being extraordinarily imaginative for Page, and he realized it all at once, and opened the paper which he had bought, with the newsboy shuffling along beside him as he hastened through the depot in Boston. But his thoughts would not concentrate upon the printed page; rather they flew to Jack's brilliant face, — the face which always said that life was good, — and saw it suddenly stamped with white despair, alone in a strange land.

The next day, arrived in Chicago, Page left the train at Hyde Park and went to a hotel. Half an hour afterward, he emerged and walked toward the lake. It was a dreary day, such as seldom comes in Chicago's October. The lake was gray from recent rain, and an east wind was whipping

dead leaves from the elms, across the green lawn around the Van Tassel house.

Page looked at the drawn curtains, walked up the steps to the crape-hung door, and an unexpected lump rose in his throat, for he thought of Jack. In that moment, there came to him a new loyal satisfaction in the fact that he had come; that some one beside aliens would stand near Uncle Richard. It was with a strange mixture of grief and resentment that he met the servant, and asked for Miss Bryant.

He looked around the well-remembered parlor, where the maid left him, and noted that it was newly and fashionably furnished; but scarcely five minutes had passed before Mildred entered the room, and walked straight up to him with outstretched hand.

He returned the greeting with cold formality, and even in the shaded room he could see that the girl's eyes were swelled from weeping.

"I am so glad you could come," she said tremulously. "Was it very inconvenient? We thought you would probably wish to attend the funeral any way. Mr. Van Tassel had so few" — she could go no further, but broke down and wept into her handkerchief.

"Crocodile tears!" thought Page. "It is more than likely that they have everything between them. — Certainly, I should have wished to come," he said aloud.

"Then — then," began Mildred, making an

effort, "my sister wanted your advice — she thought you would know best — Mr. Van Tassel trusted you — Forgive me, but we have had such a shock" — she tried vainly to go on, once, twice, then with a gesture turned and left the room.

The visitor moved to a window, and looked out through a crack of the blind.

"I'm sorry they think it necessary to go through this sort of thing," he thought cynically. "Now I suppose she will send the other one; and if that was a preface!" A sound behind him caused him to set his teeth, and turn about with the coldest, blankest expression he could assume. His eyes had grown accustomed to the dim light now, and he saw a straight slight girl in black, standing and regarding him with the saddest, loveliest countenance he had ever looked upon. Her large eyes had shed all their tears, and her delicate lips had never smiled. Her rippled brown hair framed a colorless face, and her effect was less pathetic than awe-inspiring in its pure unconscious dignity.

"This is Mr. Page?" she said, advancing and offering a hand which the young man took mechanically. "It was kind of you to come promptly. I felt that I must see you and you only, about — about Mr. Van Tassel's son."

She spoke in an even, emotionless voice, but Page noted a faint trembling of her lips at the mention of Jack.

"You are the nearest relative, and you can best decide what should be done."

Page was in all the confusion incident upon intense revulsion of feeling. He felt that he had not yet full command of his ideas; but the spontaneous desire to help this exquisite young creature, to let neither himself nor any one else wound her further, constituted his ruling passion for the moment.

"You have sent no word to Jack as yet?"

"No. As soon as your telegram came I decided to wait for you."

She had been waiting for him and he had filled the moments of his coming with brutal contempt and criticism of her.

The tearless sadness of her voice went on: "It is better for the word to go from you than from me." Her eyelids fell. "It will hurt Jack less. I would" — she lifted her eyes again and gave Page a look that his heart received as a pang. "I would gladly give my life if it could procure Jack one hour with his father, alive."

"I believe it sincerely," he answered.

The respect and sympathy of Page's tone seemed to impel her to further explanation. "It was terribly sudden and unexpected," she said. "No one — the doctor himself did not believe in the possibility of such a catastrophe. He was feeling so well for him. He was in the act of speaking of it when he sank back. His last word was 'happy.'"

She stood a moment, her eyelids dropped, in statuesque silence. Page watched her steady her tottering self-control.

"I had thought," she went on finally, "of a suc-

cession of cablegrams. Could it be broken to your cousin a little more gently, so?"

"Yes, that will be best."

"And may I ask you to send them, without regard to cost?"

"Certainly. What else can I do? I beg you to let me be useful to you in all ways that I can for Uncle Richard's sake."

"Thank you. I will give you the address of a neighbor, an old and dear friend of Mr. Van Tassel, who has been most kind. Perhaps he would be glad to consult with you."

Page soon took his leave, and until the day after the funeral did not again have opportunity to speak with the young widow. Then she sent for him and he went upstairs to the gay and delicate boudoir which Richard Van Tassel had furnished for his young wife, whose black gown to-day made the one dark spot amid its luxury.

She looked precisely the same as on the occasion of their first meeting except that now, by daylight, Page could see more distinctly her patient, marble beauty.

"I could not let you go East without thanking you," she said, greeting him gravely. "You have been very kind, and a great help to us."

The young man bowed, and murmured a polite platitude. He could think of nothing to say to her.

"Do you — I suppose you do expect your cousin to return home immediately."

"Yes. I think he will come."

"One thing which I wanted to say to you this morning is that my sister and I are going immediately to California to spend the winter. You will meet your cousin, very likely, upon his arrival?"

Page bowed.

"Will you kindly tell him that the house here is ready for him, that we shall not return to it" — Mrs. Van Tassel's even, formal utterance broke, and she suddenly averted her head. "Poor Jack!" she exclaimed. "It will make him suffer afresh to come back here, and who can comfort him? It is the best I can do, though," she added suddenly, turning again toward Page. "You know there is not one person save Mildred to whom I can speak of all this, and it is wrong to dwell upon sad and humiliating subjects with a bright young girl."

She looked scarcely older than Mildred herself, Page thought, but he eagerly offered himself as a confidant.

"I am glad Jack has you," she continued. "I wish, oh, so deeply, that I might do or say anything to alleviate his sorrow; but you see," appealingly, "the only thing I can do is to keep away. Jack and I were good friends once, but that is all over."

As Page a little later came downstairs to leave the house, Mildred Bryant rose from a seat near the fireplace in the hall. Her face looked a little paler than was its wont, and faint shadows about her eyes told of grief; but she was once more the self-possessed girl he had first seen on the train.

"You are returning at once to Boston?" she asked.

"Yes. I leave to-night."

"I saw by your face as you came downstairs that you think my sister looks badly; but of course you do. Well, I believe there is nothing more, there are no more shocks that she can suffer — unless she should lose me, and I fancy I am long for this world;" a shade of the girl's pretty ironical smile flitted over her lips; "but I could lose her," the hazel eyes suddenly became bright with unshed tears; "and," with vehemence, "I will not. I am going, we are going away to search for Clover's girlhood. It must come back. She has been cheated out of it too soon."

"Mrs. Van Tassel told me that you intend going West. Southern California will surely do her good."

"I hope so. I am glad you have been here these last days. It has been a comfort to my sister."

"Do you really think so?" eagerly.

"Without doubt. I observed that she seemed less anxious about — everything, from the moment of your coming."

"The matter of telling Jack had preyed upon her," said Page sympathetically.

He saw an indefinable change come over Mildred's face. "I suppose Jack must bear his troubles like the rest of the world," she answered with a tinge of hardness. "We thank you very much

for everything, Mr. Page," she added, holding out her hand, and the other clasped it warmly.

"I would not have failed to be here for any consideration, Miss Bryant. I hope," looking into the girl's eyes earnestly, "that the time may not be far distant when I shall meet you and Mrs. Van Tassel again."

"Thank you," returned Mildred courteously, and the young man left the house with a distinct sensation of disappointment because she had not echoed his wish. He could not avoid the suspicion that these young women would now expect and wish to walk in a separate way from that of all connections of his dear lost uncle. He himself would henceforth be classed with Jack, and, strange new disloyalty, the prospect was unsatisfactory.

He turned his steps toward the office where he was going to await a cablegram, and on his way undertook to analyze his own unreasonable feelings. "They are nothing to me, those girls," he thought, while memory presented in fresh hues that averted head leaning upon a white hand in Clover's spasm of impotent pity for Jack, and all of a sudden, instead of theorizing, Page found himself dwelling with eager pride, as if it were the climax of achievement in his life, on the fact that he had been of assistance, of use, of comfort, to that fair, pale creature, set in a sacred niche apart from all the other women in the world.

He recalled himself with cold surprise from this Scylla, only to fall into the Charybdis of a reverie

in which Miss Bryant's face and bearing were regal, as she declared that Jack must bear his trials like the rest of the world.

Page threw back his head in self-impatience. "She is a fine, bright girl, and I should like to know her better," he thought; "but there is this comfort — in a couple of months I shall have forgotten all about her. I could n't remember her if I tried."

Before evening he received the expected message from his cousin. Jack sailed from Bremen at once.

CHAPTER IX.

A CHRISTMAS VISITOR.

THE national dispute finished regarding the location of the World's Fair, a local contest at once arose among Chicago's citizens as to which portion of the city was best fitted for the display. The debate was long drawn out. Several sites were energetically lauded by their several partisans, and their respective advantages were hotly maintained and as hotly contradicted. It was very interesting to Chicagoans, but to the public outside it was a matter of indifference whether the North Side, the West Side, or the South Side, should win the day.

Meanwhile a good many people — like Miss Berry, for instance — forgot that such a thing as preparation for a World's Fair was going on. She thought it vastly more interesting that Jack Van Tassel had returned from Europe, and that in his desolation instead of going to his father's deserted house he had begun to read law in his cousin's office.

Miss Lovina's association with Mrs. Van Tassel during the summer had brought much food for thought into her quiet life; thought that haunted her after the young wife had become a widow, and after Jack had come home; his sore heart full of

cold anger, so Miss Berry surmised, against a woman whom she devoutly declared to be "one of the sweetest of God's creatures."

It was an exciting time to her when one November day she received the letter from Gorham Page giving her hope that she need not always be passive concerning a matter which, in her uneventful life, she had greatly at heart. She read: —

Dear Aunt Love, — Jack Van Tassel has come back and is with me for the present. Of course he is very much shaken; and when I met him at the dock I felt a good deal disturbed about him; but you know his excitable, gay disposition. He will doubtless soon recover from the shock, and react from his present low state. Naturally he wants to blame somebody for his suffering, and I fear he is inclined to accuse Mrs. Van Tassel of inconsiderateness in not sending for him last summer. I never met her excepting on the occasion of the funeral, so my defense has little weight; but I recall that my sister said you esteemed her highly, and it occurred to me to ask you to do what you can toward exonerating her when you see Jack, which I dare say may be soon, as he has spoken of visiting you in order to learn something of the last weeks of his father's life. Use your own discretion about this. Jack will stay with me for a time, and read law in my office for the sake of occupation. His father's affairs were left in perfect shape. His will divided the fortune

into three parts: one third is left to charities and certain relatives; one third goes to Jack, and the other to Mrs. Van Tassel, with the exception of an amount sufficient to make her sister independent, which he has left to Miss Bryant.

Please say nothing of this letter, and believe me, with best wishes always,

Cordially yours, GORHAM PAGE.

These lines had not been penned without some uncomfortable recollections on the part of the writer of a day when he had himself received the announcement of Aunt Love's attachment to her young guest in a spirit of impatient skepticism. Now that he discovered the strength of his desire that Jack should be more yielding and credulous, the memory of his own hardness was especially exasperating.

Miss Berry waited for her expected visitor with much interest, and each day altered a little the form of the statement she intended to make him when he came. She had opportunity to make a variety of changes in her programme, for weeks went by without a sign from him, and finally Miss Lovina's faith in his coming wavered.

Christmas day dawned in ideal fashion at Pearfield that year. The sun fell on swelling drifts of virgin snow. The little town sparkled like the village in a Christmas card, and just as the inevitable church spire ornaments that souvenir, so the Congregationalist meeting-house stood in a field of glis-

tening white, as Miss Berry trudged up the shoveled path to attend a service of song planned by the Sunday-school as a fitting festivity for the morning. There was a good attendance, and Miss Lovina gave her neighbors, old and young, cheerful greeting as she regarded complacently the holly wreaths which she had yesterday helped to place in the church windows.

When the exercises were over she moved slowly down the aisle by the side of Miss Getchell with whom she had promised weeks ago to eat her Christmas dinner. If there was something of the martyr concealed under Lovina's benevolent countenance as Miss Ann clutched her arm, the latter would not be allowed to suspect it, and together they emerged from the wide-open door; but once on the porch Miss Berry, with an exclamation of surprise, shook herself free, and Miss Getchell's astonished eyes beheld her friend hasten down the steps towards some one who ascended to meet her.

"It was a reg'lar young prince of a feller with grand eyes," Ann said afterward, dramatizing the occurrence to her old homekeeping mother, "and he took off his hat as he come up to Loviny as though she was somebody great." Miss Getchell's curious ears could not grasp Jack's low-spoken question: —

"Are you going out to dinner anywhere, Aunt Love?"

Miss Lovina's conscience would have done credit to any Puritan of them all, but Jack had said "are" instead of "were," and she considered that in a flash before responding heartily:

"Indeed I am not, Mr. Jack. You 're just comin' home with me and I 'm delighted. Wait one second till I speak to one o' my neighbors."

Jack suspected her as she turned back to Miss Getchell, but her evident pleasure in his arrival decided him not to press the question. He turned his back while she hurriedly and emphatically accosted her friend.

"I 'm sorry it happens so, Ann, but" —

"Oh now, don't say you won't come, Lovina. Fetch the young man along and welcome."

"Hush, don't say a word. It is Mr. Van Tassel's son. You remember. I 'll make it up to you sometime,— I mean you 'll make it up to me. You see it can't be helped. Now don't coax me, that 's a good girl; I can't possibly come, and don't be mad with me, Ann, you see just how it is," and Miss Getchell allowed herself to be twitched into dumbness by Lovina's anxious grasp upon her arm, and departed on her lonely way in a measure consoled by the consideration of two luscious mince pies which Miss Berry had sent her as a gift the day before.

"I 'll bet a cookie she wishes she had 'em back now," she reflected as she looked after the erect, tall form moving away beside Miss Berry's stout figure. "I 'm glad 't ain't me caught by a city feller like that on Christmas day without any decent dinner to give him."

But Miss Getchell and Miss Berry were two very different people. The latter, as she walked

along trying with some preoccupation to talk to her guest, was filled with felicitation that Jack had chosen for his visit the day when each heart is most inclined to gentleness, and in the same breath she rejoiced that there were two roast chickens in the larder at home prepared in a moment of dubiousness regarding Ann Getchell's cooking. "If I don't relish my dinner, I'll have a good supper," Miss Lovina had thought when she roasted them, and now the most devout thanksgiving of the morning arose from her heart in consequence.

"This is my first glimpse of Pearfield in winter," said Jack, surveying the blue-white shadows on the unspotted fields. "I dreaded Christmas this year, Aunt Love. It occurred to me yesterday that I would come to see you. It is as I expected. 'Peace on earth' does n't seem such a satire here."

"You could n't please me better," replied Miss Berry. "I 've been some expectin' you, for Mr. Gorham told me you laid out to be in Boston a while."

"Yes. I have thought a great deal about Pearfield lately." There was a brief silence as the two moved on between snowy bulwarks thrown up by the village ox-plow that morning. "Do you never become lonely here, Aunt Love?" asked her visitor at last.

"No, I don't know as I do. Pearfield 's a nice safe stiddy place and I 'm as busy as a bee all the time. Once in a while there 's a tramp, but now Blitzen attends to them in short order. We all

have our gifts," continued Aunt Love, desiring for the present to keep the conversation impersonal, "and seems if Blitzen's was appearin' to go mad whenever he wants to."

"Rather a questionable accomplishment, I should suppose."

"It is convenient sometimes, though, there ain't any denyin' it. Blitzen does hate a tramp. I believe if he was off in the woods a mile he'd smell one, if he was comin' towards the house; and no sooner does one o' the shif'less critters knock on the door and ask for a meal o' victuals, than Blitzen's there. Even if I haven't seen him for an hour and haven't the least idea where he is, he'll be there soon's the tramp is, and barkin' so the feller can't hardly make himself heard. Blitzen's tramp-bark is queer," continued Aunt Love thoughtfully. "It's mysterious to me where he gets his breath. It ain't just one bark after another, but he runs 'em all together without any let up, and so loud and long, it's curious to me he don't just choke to death and done with it."

"Rather discomposing to the tramp, I imagine."

"Well, 't is," admitted Miss Berry, one corner of her mouth smiling. "Some stand it longer 'n others; but when one o' the critters sticks to it till I 'm wore out with him, I never have to do but just one thing. I just look at Blitzen, — he 's always jumpin' and whirlin' around enough to make a clock dizzy, — and I say, 'What 's the matter with the dog!' Then I close the door a little and look

through it at the tramp and holler, 'You 'll have to excuse me, but that dog acts so queer I' — then, slam, I shut the door. It never fails to work. Takes away a tramp's appetite every time."

"I should suppose Blitzen might feel the weight of a boot under those circumstances."

"Bless your heart, Mr. Jack, don't you believe it! A man would have to be built like one o' these centerpedes to have any luck tryin' to kick Blitzen when he 's on the rampage. No sir, a tramp don't like the idea of a mad dog, and he needs all the legs *he 's* got to get over the fence with. I always step to the winder pretty certain what I 'll see. A man just lightin' out for the road, and Blitzen after him, makin' rosettes of himself, bringin' all four feet together at every bound and hollerin' enough to croozle you."

Jack laughed.

"He 's a smart dog," went on Miss Berry in the tone of one who gives the devil his due. "He 's been a means o' grace to me more 'n once, but I won't deny he 's talented. Now after one o' those whirlwind times, you 'd think he 'd be so tuckered out he 'd just have to lay down a spell and get his wind back; but land, he never turns a hair. All the time he 's playin' hydrophoby on that tramp he 's rememberin' where he buried his last bone, and he has n't any more 'n seen him over the fence when he switches around mute as a mole, and digs in the ground just as pert as though he 'd never used any energy on anything else. He needs nourishment and he knows it."

"I should suppose he would get it some day," remarked Van Tassel, "in the shape of poisoned meat."

"Law, they 've tried that," said Miss Berry contemptuously. "I 've had to laugh when I 've picked it up in the yard and burned it. It was such a simple idea. Why, if a tramp could come into the house and get one o' ma's white China plates with the gold band, and set some victuals o' mine on it and pizen 'em, he might stand some chance. Blitzen puts on more airs and frills every day about what he will eat and what he won't; but as for pickin' up strange doin's! he and I both rather prefer our own cookin' to other folks's, anyway," finished Aunt Love with a little conscious toss of her head.

The oriole elm was still bedecked with diamonds when the two entered Miss Berry's yard, and the branches of the pine trees were weighed down with a soft, white burden.

In the distance, at the sitting-room window, Blitzen's head could be seen, and it bobbed convulsively as he barked an excited welcome to his adored mistress.

"Such a time as I had to get away from him this mornin'," she said. "He knows Sunday as well as you do, but other days he expects to go to the store with me, and from the first I expected trouble. I thought I 'd begin to plan about an hour before service, so 's to slip off without his knowin' it; but Mr. Jack, I 'm glad Salem days

are gone and done with, or that dog would be burned for a witch. As sure as I 'm talkin' to you this minute, he always knows what I 'm thinkin' about. He acted meachin' from the minute breakfast was over. I was unusually clever to him too; told him Merry Christmas, and snapped my finger to him; but sir, he whined. He just sat down and looked at me pitiful and whined. I really believed the critter was sick, and felt of his nose; but it made me jump; 't was as cold 's a frog; and law, when I begun to go to church I found he wa'n't confined to the bed by a long chalk. I say *begun* to go to church, 'cause that 's just what it was. I 've been back to this house this mornin' three different times," said Aunt Love impressively. "The first time Blitzen was n't in sight anywheres, so I just thought I 'd seize the chance, and I turned the house-door key and hurried down the path, puttin' my shawl on and pinnin' my veil as I went. I had n't but just got to the cross-roads when I spied him trottin' slowly along as still and pious as though he 'd been sent for in a hurry to tend a dyin' friend. I suspicioned mischief, but still I was n't sure. You can usually tell somethin' about a dog's notions by his tail; but Blitzen not havin' any he gets the best o' me there, and he knows it. I tipped along when I saw him, for thinks says I perhaps he 's settin' out to head me off at the store, and if that was his idea it just suited me; for 't was the other cross-road that was the shortest

way to church. Well, he started that path. Now," said Aunt Love argumentatively, as she mechanically broke a long twig from a lilac bush, "I don't s'pose you believe any more 'n I do that Blitzen 's got eyes in his back, though why he should n't be equally blind in both ends is another o' the mysteries; but the very minute I set my foot, silent as the dead, mind you, into the church road, that dog stopped and looked over his shoulder. It was a hang-dog look, but set. I stopped too, and he smiled, — there, like that," for Miss Berry had unlocked the house door and Blitzen had flung himself upon her in an ecstasy, his white teeth gleaming once and again as he lifted his lip in a canine grin.

The use of the lilac switch now became apparent as Miss Lovina, holding her silk gown away with one hand, with the other belabored her adorer in a business-like manner until he became penetrated with the idea that his addresses were unwelcome.

"If 't wa'n't for whips, I should n't have one frock fit to be seen," she explained calmly, as Blitzen, unabashed, preceded them alertly into the sitting-room, where he had been alternately napping and lamenting all the morning.

"Yes, I had to bring that good-for-nothin' home from the cross-roads, — just drop your coat right off, Mr. Jack, — and I shut him up in the shed and hasped the door. Then I started off again. I told you he was a witch. There must be some hole out o' that shed that he 's made himself, for I had n't got ten rods from the house before I found

him stealin' along after me. Yes, sir, you remember it very well;" and Blitzen, whom the switching had not dispirited, now crept abjectly under the sofa. "The second time I tried the barn, but that turned out to be a sieve too, so, though it 's against my rule, I was forced when I came back the third time to lock him in the house. He has n't broke a hole through the house yet. Yes, you better stay under there, you scamp! Now you make yourself at home, Mr. Jack, while I put dinner on the table." Miss Berry, as she spoke, shook down the coal-stove, which she had left to burn as little as possible in her absence. She twitched one damper in the back and one in the front. "It 's cold as charity here," she remarked, "but we 'll soon heat up. There 's some o' those bound Harpers you used to like to look at, with the pictures o' the war in 'em; or there 's the Christian Union. I 'll call you in a little while. Want a few cookies now, just to stay your stomach?"

Jack smiled at the familiar question. Aunt Love was one of those comfortable folk who are always wanting to stay people's stomachs, especially children's. She had never thought it an odd or inconvenient fact that boys are always hungry. What wonder that she was popular? Her visitor assured her that he would prefer to wait, and she hastened out to the kitchen, her brain seething with plans to prepare a meal which should deceive the visitor as to its impromptu nature.

With great celerity she tied a huge apron over

her black silk gown, and went to work. Miss Berry's friends, could they have looked on, would have thought she had lost her wits; for never had she been known to pare potatoes to such a reckless depth. She exulted in her own rule never to let the kitchen fire go out, and flew hither and thither with a practiced deftness which allowed of no false move. Once she stumbled over some object and looked down impatiently. It was Blitzen.

"I thought you was under the settin'-room sofa, you rascal. If you dare to hender me to-day!" she said hotly. Blitzen knew there was danger in her voice, but the chickens were beginning to send forth an appetizing fragrance, and all his discretion could not keep him from joining in such a novel romp as his staid mistress was making of getting dinner. The consequence was that in a minute more Miss Lovina trod on his nimble toe. The yelp he gave exasperated her. She threw open the kitchen door.

"Go out!" she ordered sternly.

Blitzen rolled over on his back and lay there, limp, looking like a gigantic caterpillar. Miss Berry spoke once more in vain; then she swooped upon him in a totally unprecedented manner, and in another moment the terrier was picking himself out of a snowdrift to the tune of the slamming of the kitchen door.

Jack could see him from his window, sitting in the path, scratching the snow out of his ears, and reflecting on the mutations of this life.

CHAPTER X.

AUNT LOVE'S INTERCESSION.

When Van Tassel saw Blitzen describe an arc which had its beginning at the kitchen door and its vanishing point in a snowdrift, the spontaneous laugh which burst from him sounded strangely in his own ears. It was the first time he had laughed in such fashion since that October day when Page's cable messages had found him in Berlin.

He had been wondering, as he stood there by Miss Berry's small-paned window, whether Aunt Love's prattle on the way home from church had been for the express purpose of diverting him. He could not connect even that extent of diplomacy with this friend of two of his childhood's summers; but supposing her anecdotes to have had that purpose, they had been successful. Jack felt content to be here. The cold pure blankness of this outside world, the absence of all necessity for exertion or assumption of an interest he did not feel, were surpassingly restful.

He had known that a merry Christmas was not for him, and had shrunk from either joining in or appearing to avoid the festivities of his Boston friends; hence the idea of this postponed visit had come to him as a deliverance, and been suddenly acted upon.

When Aunt Love finally presented herself again, smiling, red-cheeked, and minus the apron, Jack found it awoke in him something like the appetite of olden days to be led into the dining-room where a tempting meal was spread.

The hostess heroically refrained from apologies concerning a certain dryness of those twice-heated chickens, since it might be hazardous to open the subject; and the cream gravy generously provided, with the delicate mashed potato, hot biscuit, brandied peaches, and other adjuncts of the impromptu meal, were delicious enough to divert the attention of even the hypercritical from complaint. A couple of mince pies, the mates to those in Miss Getchell's possession, and cups of golden coffee with Alderney cream, finished a dinner calculated to put a misanthrope into good humor, provided his pessimism did not arise from a poor digestion.

It was a pleasure in itself to Jack to see what pleasure his presence gave. He had been most kindly and tactfully treated in the Page home; but they were too conscious there of his sorrow, too comprehensive of his state of mind. Aunt Love was jolly. She was so entirely absorbed in the pleasant responsibility of making her guest materially comfortable, that she seemed to have no room at present for other thought; and her own wholesome appetite was infectious. She talked of summers long past, and evaded all reference to recent events. Jack ate a hearty dinner, and as Miss Berry watched him sitting opposite, leisurely

drinking and appreciating her coffee, she felt wrapped in an atmosphere of content.

"You are going to let me help you clear this all away and wash the dishes?" said Jack, as he finished.

His hostess laughed deprecatingly, looking at the hand with which he raised his cup to his lips. She had been admiring the slender links in his immaculate cuffs all through the dinner. There was a facet-like cutting in their gold that gave them a glisten which attracted her.

"No. We 're both of us too much dressed up to wash dishes," she remarked. "I don't care if they ain't done for a week, Mr. Jack. I 'm goin' to enjoy myself with you, this afternoon. You make yourself at home in any part o' the house but the kitchen for twenty minutes, and then I 'll sit down with you. I guess you have n't forgotten your way 'round."

Jack regarded her with serious brown eyes. "Are there any moths in your sitting-room carpet, Aunt Love?" he asked.

Miss Berry looked amazement, and even a little anxiety lest her young friend's brain had received more of a shock than she realized. "What makes you ask that?" she demanded, being careful to speak gently.

"I know a sovereign remedy, that 's all."

"I did, one time, have some trouble with that carpet," said Miss Berry doubtfully, "but pepper 's good; I used that. Camphor, too."

"Tobacco is excellent," declared Van Tassel. looking pensively into the depths of his coffee cup.

A light of comprehension broke over Miss Berry's face.

"Mr. Jack, do you smoke!" she exclaimed reproachfully. "Do you shut those shiny white teeth o' yours on an old pipe-stem! Oh, there never ought a cigar to go into your mouth, never in the world. Do you *smoke?*"

"Well — on Fourth of Julys, and New Years, and Christmas, and — birthdays, I do sometimes celebrate, and I thought if you wanted the moths kept out of your carpet — One thing really, Aunt Love, if cigar smoke is disagreeable to you, you ought to have told me before betraying me into such a dinner."

"It is n't any more disagreeable to me than it is to any other woman of good principles," returned Miss Berry firmly. "'T is n't a question o' that. I can show you statistics, Mr. Jack."

"Yes, I have seen statistics," he answered, mildly. "You have n't time to look them up just now, and I think I 'll walk out of doors a while and discuss the movement cure with Blitzen, and ask him what part of the chicken he 'll take."

"No, no, Mr. Jack. There ain't enough paths shoveled to make it pleasant to go out around the house. I let Obed go just as soon as he 'd done what was absolutely necessary this mornin'. 'T ain't that a cigar 's unpleasant to my *nose*. It 's my principles it hurts; but 't ain't so bad if you only

smoke one for an occasional recreation. Remember you can't suit me except by makin' yourself entirely at home;" and the hospitable woman arose from the table. "If you don't smoke *now* in the sittin'-room, I shall feel bad."

So Van Tassel went back to his window and sent a few rings of fragrant smoke into the air before putting on his hat and sallying down the garden path. He had not finished his cigar before he heard himself called.

Miss Berry was standing in the open door, beckoning to him. "Time 's up," she said, smiling.

Jack smiled back and held up the cigar explanatorily.

"I know all about that. Come in. It 's a good smellin' one," she added, as her guest obediently returned to the piazza. "If folks would burn a few leaves o' tobacco like that occasionally, it would be agreeable enough, some like incense; but it 's a pity to have it at the cost of a man's poisonin' his lungs."

Van Tassel followed her back to the sitting-room, where he took the armchair she had arranged for him, and smiled to see that one of the white and gold China saucers had even been sacrificed to receive the ashes of that disapproved cigar.

He thanked her and took from his pocket a little dark velvet box. "Here is something I brought you as a Christmas gift, Aunt Love. I had to get it in a hurry last night and I don't feel sure that it will please you."

Miss Berry opened the case and gazed at a bar pin of onyx set with a conventional design of pearls. "It 's good enough for an empress!" she exclaimed in ingenuous delight. "Why, you 're too good, Mr. Jack. I 'm just gettin' spoiled this Christmas. I got another present out o' the post-office last night," and Miss Lovina took from her pocket another and smaller box which she put into Jack's hand. "Velvet too, you see," she said, beaming, "and more precious yet inside, just like yours."

Jack opened the case and found a gold thimble.

"And it 's big enough for me," announced the happy owner triumphantly; "I did n't know as gold ones grew big enough for workin' hands like mine; but you would n't catch Mrs. Van Tassel givin' anybody a thing they could n't use."

Jack's head was bent above the bauble. "Oh, it is from her?"

"Yes," answered Aunt Love, recalled by his tone from her heedless flight of enthusiasm. "This pin will always make me vain and happy," she added, "and I thank you from my heart, Mr. Jack, for thinkin' about me."

"You have been an important person in my thoughts this fall," said the young man, as he handed her the thimble, "for you can tell me of my father."

Jack looked thoughtfully at his cigar, and Aunt Love, from her neighboring chair, looked at him.

"I will tell you," she said, after waiting a moment to see if her guest wished to proceed. "I

will tell you everything I can. Do you want to ask me questions, or shall I just talk to you a little?"

"I want to know just how ill he was through the summer. I was deliberately kept in the dark."

Miss Berry was alert to perceive the resentment in the quiet tone.

"He was n't ill at all. Not so to say real sick," she replied. "His head did n't feel quite right after that light shock he got in the spring, and he thought he was takin' every precaution by comin' out of all the excitement of his busy life, right to this farm. The doctor said it was just the best thing he could do; and Mrs. Van Tassel" —

"Then he was not confined to his bed here?"

"No, indeed. Not a day. He had a steamer chair out under the big elm, and it never seemed to fret him a bit to be idle; and his wife" —

"He used to write me from under that tree," said Jack thickly.

"Yes, indeed he did; and he liked to be read to, and to play backgammon; and whenever Mrs. Van Tassel" —

"I ought to have been here to wait on him. What I was cheated out of!"

"But, Mr. Jack," Miss Berry spoke pleadingly, "you was trampin' through Switzerland, and just havin' the best time of all. Your father used to have guide-books and atlases, and follow up what you were doin' every day. Why, he entered into it, and enjoyed it just as if it was himself. He

did n't know, and Mrs. Van Tassel did n't know, that there was n't many another summer comin'."

"It makes it especially hard," said Jack, still staring at the forgotten cigar, dropped now into the saucer, "that I had been away from him four years already. The past summer is the one I should have spent with him. It seems as though the regret and the loss could never be forgotten. There never was such a father as mine." The speaker's features worked convulsively an instant. "The world is only a big, barren desert, without him, and I might have had all those months. I might" —

Aunt Love used to feel an especial tenderness for Jack when she tucked him into bed at night, because he had no mother to do it for him, and she had often kissed the child after he was asleep, for the same reason. Now his pale face in its pain and effort at self-mastery appealed to her irresistibly. In a moment she had slipped her arm around his shoulders, and with her other hand drawn his head gently against her breast.

"I know you've been hurt awful bad, dear heart," she said, tears running down her own cheeks, as she softly patted his hair.

For Jack, he did not stop to be astonished. It was too comforting to have the barriers of his self-restraint forcibly broken down. From the time when furtive bitter drops had added to the ocean's brine, as he meditated at evening on board the home-coming ship in cold November, no loving

human soul had dared till now to take his grief into full companionship. Aunt Love's primitive, spontaneous method worked well. It seemed the most natural thing in the world to her that he should weep in her embrace, on the ample bosom of her black silk gown; and who shall say what a comfort it was to Jack, with no spectators but the haircloth chairs and sofa, to be held close in loving arms after weeks of lonely, speechless heartache under a conventional exterior.

"You are very good to me," he said at last, and though he leaned back in his chair, he continued to hold one of Aunt Love's plump hands as though she were a sort of anchor which he could not let go all at once.

"And now you 've got to be patient with me just a minute, dear boy," said his companion, "and listen to something you won't like to hear, perhaps. My conscience would n't rest easy unless I told you a little about your father's wife."

"I know her," said Jack. "I don't want you to think I doubt her kindness to him. I am jealous of her. That is all."

"Kindness ain't just the word," persisted Aunt Love. "I can imagine your father livin' through such a summer as last was, and havin' a pretty weary time of it, cut off from so much that had made his life before. Now I just want you to picture this young woman, a pretty, girlish critter that had seen trouble enough to make her low-spirited if she 'd had a mind to be, just studyin'

to make the days pleasant for him. She was cheerful in just such a stiddy way as a brook is; not much noise about it, but always right there, singin' if so be you want it. She played games with your dear father, or she read to him, or she waited on him, or she just set and sewed and let him look at her, whichever happened to suit his mood; and he bein' always thoughtful and tender of her, 't was just a pleasure to see 'em together. She hunted up maps and articles about places you was travelin', and from sunrise till sunset she just had one idea, and that was whether anything could make Mr. Van Tassel any more comfortable than he was. He was a happy man in spite of the new weakness which might have made him miserable. Ain't that somethin' for you to remember when you think of the woman that bears his name? You know some kinds o' clover brings the person that finds it good luck. I often used to think o' that as I watched 'em together, and I thought your father had found one of the best sort. It 's a good name for her. Clover 's just like her, unpretendin' and sweet, whether it 's red or white; always cheerful and innocent, distillin' honey for mankind." Miss Berry paused a minute before she went on: "The word *father* means a great deal to you, Mr. Jack. It was the heavenly Father that gave that lovely companion to soothe Mr. Van Tassel's last days; and the same all-lovin' Father has permitted a great blow to fall upon you; but the Holy One whose birthday we are

keepin' to-day said that in this world we must have tribulation, and He told us, too, be of good cheer. The Saviour did overcome the world; there is a heaven, your father has gone to it, and you and I are both bound for it. It 's the main concern we 've got in life to get ready for it. Let your sorrow help you along, Mr. Jack, and don't shut anybody out o' your generous heart, least of all the woman I 've been talkin' about."

Van Tassel took an eight o'clock train back to Boston that night. He walked to the station with a lighter step than the one that had carried him from it. Some subtle influence had softened him; some poisoned rankling dart had been drawn away. A crescent moon hung in the sky. The quiet snowclad village suggested more than ever the idea of a Christmas picture, and the song that the angels once sang, as they floated through the starry heavens, seemed now to fall like a benediction from above: "Peace on earth, good will to men."

CHAPTER XI.

THE DEDICATION.

Gorham Page thought he perceived a change for the better in the spirits of his cousin, after that visit to Pearfield, but Jack said little about the event. It was well into the New Year, when the two happened to be alone in the office one afternoon, that Jack mentioned his father's widow voluntarily for the first time since his return.

"Did I understand you to say, Gorham, that Clover sent word to me that she should not return to the Hyde Park house?"

"Yes."

"Do you think it was because she felt enmity, or because she feared it?"

"Why, it is your house," said Page. "It was left to you, as it turns out."

"Yes, but what difference does that make?" returned the other, with a tinge of impatience, the unreasonableness of which made his cousin smile.

"She wished you to feel full liberty in coming back," said the latter. "She broke down when she spoke of it, I remember."

"I don't like that," asserted Jack, turning over the pages of Blackstone. "I don't like to have Clover exiled from a comfortable place, where she

would like to be. It is a dog-in-the-manger business that does n't suit me in the least."

"I guess you need n't worry about the matter," remarked Page. "Mrs. Van Tassel is in no condition to bear a Chicago winter."

"Do you mean she is ill?" asked the other, shutting the heavy book suddenly.

"I don't know. She looks like alabaster, or something that would be easily broken. Miss Bryant was evidently much distressed about her."

Jack fell into a brown study. It sounded strange to hear his cousin speak of these old schoolmates by such names. The idea of Clover, jolly, laughing Clover, with her sunburned cheeks and dancing blue eyes, — the idea that any one should speak of her as looking like alabaster. And Miss Bryant! It was a jest in itself to hear his serious cousin refer in that tone, and by such a dignified title, to Mildred. It was more than two years since Jack had seen the romping girl, whose heavy hair would never remain in its braid, and who, it seemed, would never cease outgrowing her clothes.

He thought of the sisters for some time, while Page went on with his work. He recalled the little boy and girl who had loved him, and gentle Mrs. Bryant, whose mother-heart had always made him welcome equally with her own children. They had all gone now to that world which had lately gained definite interest for him. Had Clover and Mildred suffered yearning and loss comparable

to his? The mere thought, tolerantly admitted, gave him a new feeling toward his old comrades.

At last he spoke again. "Where did Mrs. Van Tassel say they were going?"

It was the first time he had given his friend her title. Page observed it.

"California," he answered sententiously.

"That does n't tell anything."

Page smiled slightly. "Perhaps that is just what she considered," he returned, and Jack thought that Gorham was a provoking, dry sort of fellow.

"I 'll tell you what I 'm going to do," he said, rising. "I 'm going to Chicago."

"Are you? Well, you are that favored species of individual who can control his own movements."

"Yes. They 've ceased pulling hair out there, and have decided to locate the Fair in Jackson Park, quite near our house, you remember."

"So I observed. They have lost a good deal of time in controversy, it strikes me. They will have to scratch gravel now."

And this, if Mr. Page had only known it, was literally what had begun to be done out there in Chicago, in the unreclaimed district which bordered Jackson Park on the south.

Sand-dunes and marshes, woodland and slough, had all to be effaced, for a new earth must be offered in time to be the foundation for those castles in the air, which were already creating in men's brains.

As the scope of the proposed work unfolded and became clear, the time began to seem nigh to hopelessly short for its accomplishment. Of public opinion in the East, the kindest expression continued patronizing, amused, and skeptical; the average, contemptuous and hostile.

But Chicago, which had formed a habit of making stepping-stones of obstacles, now said "I will" with greater doggedness of purpose than ever before, and sending steam dredges to invade the wilderness, began the patient, laborious grubbing, which was necessary to excavate in one place, and fill in in another. Meanwhile the oldest inhabitant wandered about, looking on, wondering and fascinated. The maiden, going in advance of the feller of trees, caught with her kodak a farewell glimpse of the wood-road, that had furnished a foothold amid the sand for the spring violets of her childhood. The small boy looked longingly at the sloughs, which had been first to freeze in autumn, and thought it a thousand pities that Chicago had been so brave as to deserve the Fair. The Eastern papers thought so too, and still exercised the virtue of frankness to the fullest extent; but Chicago, with all her reputation for talking, now had no time for such indulgence; but emulated Uncle Remus's famous tar-baby, who, it will be remembered, when Brer Rabbit jeered at her once and again, still "ain't sayin' nothin'." She only grubbed away, and her citizens prepared themselves for the long pull, the strong pull, and

the pull all together, which should win ultimate triumph.

When Jack arrived there, he found his city in all the excitement of work and plans and anticipation. His father's Scotch housekeeper, Jeanie, was in possession as of old when he reached home, and gave him a reception in which tears mingled with cordiality. "It 's all different without your father, Mr. Jack," she mourned, "but we must bear it, — we must bear it."

Jack went through the house, finding changes in every room but his own. In that one, every object was familiar.

Jeanie had nothing but good words for her young mistress. She was ready to praise her as long as Jack would have patience to listen. Miss Bryant, too, came in for a share of her voluble encomiums; but she did not know where they were, for though Mrs. Van Tassel wrote her an occasional note, she said they were moving about from place to place.

The upshot of Jack's trip was, that he went back to Boston and his cousin's office, and waited for destiny to show him some natural way of communicating his generous impulses to Clover.

So he lived through the winter, keeping up some interests in common with certain of his classmates, and gaining a reputation for touchiness regarding his native city, with whose exertions he felt a loyal and filial sympathy. It made him hot to read and hear frequent allusions to prove that the public

was still holding its sides with merriment over the exquisite humor of the idea that upstart, pork-packing Chicago should undertake to conceive and carry out a true World's Fair, one fit to follow the great similar achievements of the Old World nations, and to be an adequate embodiment of the high ideas which gave birth to the enterprise.

It was little mollifying to him to perceive that much of the sneering had at least the merit of genuineness; that there was much sincere incredulity of Chicago's ability to rise to an occasion so remote from her habits and experience. With his Cambridge training, his youth, and his years of absence from home, he might have sympathized in all this, more with than against the Eastern element, but for his father's active labors, and his own knowledge of the men who had the matter in hand.

Only once Jack heard of Clover and Mildred during the summer that followed. He visited Miss Berry again, and heard from her that Mrs. Van Tassel's health was reëstablished, and that the sisters had taken a trip to Alaska. He asked her to convey to them, for him, an earnest invitation to return to the homestead, whenever they pleased.

Once again, in the winter, he learned from the same source of information that they had gone to Europe. In June, Van Tassel and Page took a trip through the English and Scottish lakes to-

gether. Clover and Mildred evidently wished to live a life apart. Very well, it should be as they pleased; but Jack could not help looking for them at each little inn where his and Page's horses stopped. His father's memory was still a living, ever-present one, and persons so strongly associated with him could not be forgotten.

In the autumn the young men came home to find the country absorbed in Columbian celebrations. Red and yellow was as popular a combination as red, white, and blue. Columbus was pictured on every hand. There was no sameness, no fear of monotony about these representations. He was shown thin and stout, old and young, fair and dark, narrow-visaged and rotund of countenance. Meanwhile, the dedication in his honor drew on apace.

The twentieth of October, Chicago was to be clothed in bunting, and the great men of the country were to be drawn by prancing steeds through her streets. On the twenty-first, the Exposition buildings were to be dedicated to their splendid use, and Jack Van Tassel told his cousin that they must both be present at the ceremonies. Page demurred, but Van Tassel had his way, and ten o'clock of that sunshiny, clear, Friday morning found the two men entering the grounds, where a sense of roominess was the first sensation, after struggling in the city's crowd.

Jack felt his breast swell with pride in the fair scene, incomplete, yet already inspiring; but he

forbore from being the first to comment. Let the Boston man speak; and he finally did. Page's eyes slowly took in an overwhelming impression of the general scheme, — of what had already been, and what would be accomplished. Then he spoke: —

"This is great — so far."

The words were balm to his companion.

Page went on.

"But Eastern men designed these palaces. Eastern art" —

"Now look here," burst forth Jack. "Don't try to apologize for Chicago's achievement. She has n't got there yet, quite, of course, but she is arriving. She had sense enough to make this Fair a national and not a local business. You 're surely not surprised at that? She understood it that way from the first. They are not all Chicago men who have done this work, but be kind enough to remember that they are Chicago men who have laid the brains of this country under contribution, and whose indomitable energy has been the steam which has actuated the vast machinery of construction from the beginning, and will do so to the end. Don't explain it, my friend; just say it is stupendous, and pass on."

Page, as he silently obeyed, remembered Mildred Bryant's prophetic words in the Portland train: —

"It is very fortunate for the country that we have taken the Fair."

It began to look that way; still herculean tasks remained.

Jack had received an invitation to witness the parade from the loggia of the Mining building, and the cousins bent their steps thither, between the lines of waiting spectators. At present, the building was used as barracks for troops. The two glanced down the neat perspective of soldier beds, as they ran up the broad flight of steps leading to the gallery, then they came out upon the balcony that faces north, and looked with interest upon the scene. Flags in great numbers were flying from every roof. The waterways and Wooded Island lay before them in the October sunlight.

They were talking of the names of buildings, and discussing the fabulous measurements of the mountain called Manufactures and Liberal Arts, when a new party appeared from the gallery doorway. The new-comers advanced to an arch a couple of rods from where the young men were standing, and Jack, who was profoundly interested in his subject, merely received an impression of beauty and fashion as he glanced at them, and then, looking back, returned to his statistics.

"If they can only have good weather the coming winter," he went on, "the thing will be ready May 1st, in spite of the croakers."

Soft laughter and happy voices came from beyond the massive masonry, which half concealed their neighbors.

"Jack," said Page, in a low tone, "Mrs. Van Tassel and Miss Bryant are with that party."

"No! Why, I did n't see them."

"Yes. Mrs. Van Tassel has some kind of a gray and white dress on, and Miss Bryant" —

"I want to get out of here, then."

Page answered him sharply.

"Is it your intention to play the rôle of Indian toward those ladies the rest of your life?"

"No, nothing of the kind," returned Van Tassel uncomfortably. "I am more willing to see them than they probably are to see me. I don't blame Clover, if she chooses never to meet me again. I suppose she remembers as clearly as I do some of the last things I said to her. Whew!" for in changing their positions one member of the party had stepped back into plain sight, "what a stunning girl they have with them!"

"That was Miss Bryant," said Page.

"No, no. You did n't see the one I meant. Splendid creature; carried her head as though the Fair was built expressly for her."

"Yes, that was Miss Bryant. I have met her a number of times. Perhaps I had better go over and speak to her."

"Don't think of it till I am out of the way," and Jack grasped his cousin's arm. "That, Mildred? Milly *Bryant?*" he added incredulously, looking reminiscently into that young woman's past, and seeing a combination of tanned countenance, rough hair, and old clothes revealing sur-

plus wrist and ankle; a picture which refused to have relation to the trim and elegant young creature who had caught his eye.

This revelation increased to a panic Jack's desire not to intrude upon these friends. As though to enlighten him still further, Mildred insisted that her sister should step back also, and see some vista, which her own movement had brought into range.

Jack instinctively shrank more closely into the shadow of his pillar, while Page sympathetically followed his example, and both stole glances at Clover's pleased, unconscious face; a changed face from that which either of the men knew as hers. Jack saw in it the signs of a greater maturity and life-experience, as well as the subtle charm which exists in a lovely woman whose advantages are set off by tasteful and fashionable attire. Page saw what still seemed to him an angelic countenance, only made earthly by the tints of healthy youth, alert with interest; these smiling lips were but distantly related to the rigid, delicate mouth he remembered.

Clover vanished again, recalled by her companions' interest in a company of cavalry who galloped in golden glory across a distant bridge.

"I wish I was out of this," exclaimed Jack. "They may all take it into their heads to come over here any minute. If the girls were alone, I should n't mind it. They could behave as they pleased then; but with mutual friends it would

be very awkward for them. Dick Ogden is in the party. I can hear his laugh this minute. I 'm going, Gorham."

"Very well, I too, then. Here comes some governor and his staff."

"Yes, it is Russell. The crowd is safe to cheer now and wave handkerchiefs for five minutes. It is our chance. We sha'n't be noticed. Come."

Jack started across the loggia with Page beside him. As ill luck would have it, the only one of the party by the balcony who turned idly curious eyes to look after the pair was his friend Ogden.

"Why there 's — it *is* Van Tassel!" ejaculated the latter. "*Oh*, Van."

How Jack anathematized the cheerful, loud voice. He turned a deaf ear and hastened on.

"Van Tassel!" bawled the other. "Here, what 's the matter with you? They 're here, old fellow."

There is no creature so difficult to escape as the man who is convinced he is doing you a favor.

Jack could hear the legs of his persecutor's chair grate on the flooring as he sprang to his feet. He paused and turned around, knowing that if he persisted, his misguided friend would not hesitate to pursue and capture him in his zeal.

"They 're right here," repeated Ogden explanatorily, his ingenuous florid face beaming. "Was n't it curious you should have passed by, so near and yet so far?"

Van Tassel and Page advanced, the former with

a rigidly impassive countenance. It seemed long to him that he was crossing the ten feet of balcony which lay between him and the young women whose reception he feared sensitively.

Ogden, and doubtless their other friends, supposed them united by ties of intimacy. Much as he disliked to obtrude himself upon them, to permit strangers to suppose that he was not pleased to meet these ladies would set many tongues wagging and was not to be considered. Better to risk a snub than to appear disloyal to those his father had honored.

But he need not have feared. Clover and Mildred were not the inexperienced girls of his acquaintance. They had taken in the situation as keenly as he had done, and when he reached them were ready to greet him and Mr. Page in a matter-of-course manner, calculated to divert suspicion had any existed. The circumstances, moreover, were favorable. The common interest of the parade at once claimed the attention of all, and after Page had been introduced to the strangers of the party, Jack drew a breath of relief that at any rate the ice was broken.

He stood near Mildred, looking down upon the gay plumes, uniforms, and prancing steeds of the procession, and wished she would address him. Was this the girl who had always been eagerly ready to act as crew of his boat, whose strong arms had not been of contemptible assistance in bailing her out? who had received his invitations to sail

in a thankful spirit, being thereby richly repaid for her physical exertions? She had sometimes needed to be snubbed out of too energetic participation in his own and Clover's plans. She had been a good fellow always, Jack remembered, even if occasionally inconveniently effervescent in the matter of animal spirits; had been an honest, fair antagonist, with a brave love of sport.

It struck Van Tassel as very curious that he should be so meekly desirous now of a crumb of friendly notice from one who had looked up to him so long and loyally.

He wished he could forget some of those heated things he had said to Clover on that miserable afternoon. Of course she had repeated them to her sister, and he felt uncomfortably sure that the memory of them was even now seething beneath the jetted crown of Miss Bryant's hat.

He envied Page the unconsciousness with which he could lean toward either sister, making and receiving comments. Clover's sweet face moved him with a tide of thought that gave his eyes a sad expression, which she caught on the only occasion when she looked up into his face.

On the whole, it was an uncomfortable half-hour which Jack spent in that loggia. The talk and laughter of the others gave him a feeling of remoteness and isolation. He wanted Clover or Mildred to speak to him, and they did not. He could not address them without a bit of encouragement. It was a relief to him when it was proposed

to forsake the interminable lines of militia which were filing by the Transportation Building, and adjourn in search of luncheon.

Page seemed determined to accept Dick Ogden's urgent invitation that the cousins should continue of the party, and indeed Gorham started off gayly with Mildred, as though it were a matter of course that Jack should follow. The consequence was that, feeling a good deal as though the whole experience were a dream of the Thanksgiving variety, Van Tassel found himself after a while placed next Clover at table. On her other side sat Dick's mother, a lady remarkable for an imposing figure and a fluffy pompadour of curling white hair. As this personage declared that the morning in the open air had given her an alarming appetite and proceeded to apply her full attention to its demands, conversation with her languished. Jack observed this, and renouncing the nightmare idea with an effort, endeavored to make necessity serve him.

"You have been abroad all summer, I believe," he remarked to his neighbor.

"Yes, longer than that," returned Clover. Her self-possession seemed untroubled; but in reality she suffered, too, from mingled emotions. She pitied Jack, but resented the fact that circumstances had forced them together, and his presence evoked memories overwhelmingly bitter and tender.

"Gorham Page and I did the lake regions of England and Scotland this year," he went on. "Did you happen to be in that vicinity?"

"No, we stayed in Switzerland during the summer months."

"You have seen much of the world in the last two years."

"Yes. Mildred and I feel ourselves quite experienced travelers."

"Shall you be satisfied to settle down now for a time?"

"I can hardly tell. We have formed a dangerous habit."

"Are you" — Jack looked busily into his plate — "Are you stopping at home — at the old house?"

"We have no home yet. We mean to settle down some day and make one."

"Why, have you parted with that dear old place, Mrs. Van Tassel?" asked Mrs. Ogden sonorously, helping herself again to chicken salad.

"Mrs. Van Tassel finds it rather large for her purposes, I fancy," answered Jack quickly, "and our old housekeeper mourns her defection; but we haven't parted with the place. I was there in January, Clover, and Jeanie shed a few tears in her homesickness for you. I haven't seen her yet this time. Page and I only got in yesterday, and we went to the Great Northern."

Jack did not add that this unusual step was taken because he hoped that Clover and her sister might have returned and taken advantage of the invitation he sent them long ago through Miss Berry.

"Do you know how steadily I have clung to Boston of late?" he continued.

"Aunt Love wrote me you were there with your cousin. Are you going to adopt it as your home?"

"No indeed. You will think, Mrs. Ogden," leaning forward to speak across Clover to her neighbor, "that Mrs. Van Tassel and I are very poor correspondents. Here we have both been roving about for the past year and waiting to meet in order to learn details about one another's movements."

"You can't tell me anything about young men as correspondents," replied Mrs. Ogden feelingly. "When Dick is away, the most I ever expect from him is a telegram every day or two."

"We're a bad lot," admitted Jack. "No," speaking again to Clover, "I am a Chicagoan, and just now prouder than ever of the fact. I fancy that we shall all come home like straying chickens on May 1, '93. Of course you intend to be here during the Fair?"

"Yes. Mildred and I both anticipate it highly."

"I tell you, Mrs. Van Tassel," put in Mrs. Ogden, "if you don't want to use your house next summer, you can make a fortune renting it. In that situation, within walking distance of the grounds, you can get anything you like to ask for it."

Clover for a second time was about to disclaim any right or title to the homestead, but Jack besought her with a glance.

"I think we shall find it too convenient to be dispensed with," he said hastily.

After luncheon the party separated; their invitations to the dedicatory exercises in the Liberal Arts Building admitting them to different situations.

The scene was such as one is glad to have assisted in for its uniqueness if nothing more. Even seeing scarcely made it possible to grasp the vastness of an auditorium covering forty acres; through whose outer corridors companies of cavalry passed now and then without making a noticeable sound within. Theodore Thomas's orchestra with its attendant singers, a company of six thousand in all, made but a little bright bouquet in one spot, and the leader was obliged to telephone to the platform half way down the hall in order to be informed when a speech had ceased and a musical number might take its turn.

At the end of the building opposite from Thomas, the Mexican band enlivened the meditations of the few thousands, fifteen or so, who were near enough to enjoy their martial strains. Mammoth banners and flags made gay the grand arches that supported the roof, and each tassel on those which were so decorated weighed as much as a woman.

Only a Brobdignagian could have felt at ease in such surroundings, yet wonderful order was maintained amid this largest audience ever gathered together under one roof.

Clover and Mildred were near enough to the singers to hear the *pièce de résistance*, Chadwick's inspiring, moving ode, and as she listened Clover's eyes grew moist under the stress of the day's emotions.

"Jack is evidently very friendly," she said that night to her sister, when they were alone in their room at the Auditorium.

"He ought to be," returned Mildred shortly.

"He behaved very well and kindly," continued Clover. "The situation was odious."

"Odious. I should think so," remarked Mildred. "I never disliked that bawling Dick Ogden as I did when he kept on calling Jack like that. Don't begin to praise him to me," added the girl, turning toward her elder a glowing face. "After Jack Van Tassel has dragged around on his knees a good long time I am going to forgive him. Not before."

Clover looked troubled. "But it might all have been so awkward for us had he chosen to behave differently," she protested. "It is much easier for us to lock injuries in our breasts that the world knows nothing of, than it would be to have a gossiping set of people wondering and staring. Jack has grasped the bunch of nettles and saved us from those stings. You can feel as you please about it, but I am grateful."

"I wish he would go away. I wish he 'd go to Kamschatka," exclaimed Mildred hotly. "I can't rid myself, when he is present, of the idea that

he is considering how very differently we should be situated now if it were n't for dear Mr. Van Tassel."

"Well, it is true."

"Don't be tiresome, Clover. Of course it is true; but Jack has grown so grave and quietly observing, I feel that I shall not be able to endure having him about. I like fine clothes and fashionable life generally, and when I am soaring in my natural element, if Jack is going to give me those meditative, suggestive stares, it will ruin my pleasure. It is just as if one had a string about a bird's ankle and could twitch it down whenever he liked."

"I think you feel so because you have n't talked with him yet, Mildred. You know Jack was always generous."

"Was he?" the young girl faced her sister. "Was he when he accused you and insulted you?"

"Oh, I 've forgiven him, Milly," returned the other gently, making a repressive gesture. "I have considered his standpoint a great deal since then; and we enjoyed his father and benefited by him when the only son was far away. We even had the priceless privilege of serving him in his last days, while Jack was unwittingly defrauded. Oh, I should not have been at all surprised if he had been unable to take me by the hand to-day. Don't be hard on Jack."

CHAPTER XII.

GORHAM PAGE'S COMMISSION.

A FEW days afterward a bell-boy brought Gorham Page's card to Mrs. Van Tassel's parlor. It was followed shortly by the young man himself, who felicitated himself upon his good fortune in finding her at home.

"My stay in Chicago will be so short, that had you been out I fear I should not have met you again," he said. "I am happy to see, Mrs. Van Tassel," Gorham inspected her with kindly, short-sighted eyes, "that travel has done all for you Miss Bryant hoped. Your face has quite a new color and contour."

"No, just my old one," she answered lightly, indicating a seat near her own. "I am sorry my sister is out; but she is a gay girl," with a little smiling sigh. "Wherever she is, somehow a number of engagements seem to crop up."

"Yes. One can see that she is a leader by nature. I should like to have seen Miss Bryant. However, my errand is with you especially to-day."

"Oh, it is an errand that has brought you? How unflattering!"

"Not necessarily. It argued nothing unflattering when John Alden performed his famous errand to Priscilla."

Page looked argumentatively into his hostess's amused eyes.

"Haven't you gone a long way afield for a simile?" she asked.

"No, I think not. I was quite as reluctant as poor John to accept the mission."

"Then decline it even at this late hour. I am the least curious of women."

"Impossible." Page shook his head. "Miles Standish is waiting for me over there at the Northern, and he is in a great state of mind."

"You tempt me to wish I had been out when your card came up. Perfunctory visits are very uncomfortable. I think you had better return to your friend, and tell him that Priscilla would not allow you to speak."

"I 'm not making you uncomfortable, am I?" asked Gorham looking up and half laughing. "You see it is this way. I wanted to come to see you, and as soon as Jack learned my intention, he burdened me with this business. He told me to be eloquent, and not being in the least so, I am overwhelmed by my responsibilities. I had a presentiment, and told him so, that I should make a mess of the whole affair; but he insisted upon trusting his messenger as blindly as the Puritan captain of old."

Page had a way of lapsing, as he talked, into a meditative manner.

"And do you insist upon refusing to be warned by John Alden's failure?" asked Mrs. Van Tassel.

"Oh, I must n't fail," he returned with prompt simplicity. "That is, if I do I shall take a room here in the Auditorium for the remainder of my stay. We all make rather a pet of Jack," he explained. "The thought of denying him or contradicting him presents itself somewhat in the light of a catastrophe. What do you think, Mrs. Van Tassel, of the effect on the average character of a habit of success?"

Really, Clover thought this was one of the oddest men she had ever met; but his question was so serious that she felt constrained to express an opinion.

"I am afraid I am no student of character, but I should say it would have a genial, developing effect."

"Yes, one thinks so at the first blush, and that continued failure would dwarf the faculties. One can hardly lay down a rule where exceptions are so numerous; and of course success and failure are never accidents."

"I think they seem to be so very often."

"No," Page shook his head. "Everything is the result of law."

"Then the character that dominates and commands success must grow by what it feeds upon, and expand in its own sunlight. I was right."

"Yes; but the flowers and fruits of a tropical sun are heavy in scent and often coarse of flavor; while the flower that struggles for life and develops in meagre warmth is like the New England arbutus, both strong and delicate."

"People have such varying standards by which they measure success and failure," said Clover. "That sort of scanty, hard-won success which might be typified by the arbutus would scarcely be counted success by many."

"True," said Page, nodding his head at her thoughtfully. "There ought to be some reliable touchstone which we could apply to every case."

"Surely there is," replied Clover.

Her guest brightened. "You mean we should judge according to our best education in right and wrong?"

She nodded. "It amounts to that. It seems to me that all that comes to us is important only according to its effect on character."

Page looked at her with admiring approval. Here was a woman, a girl in years, who had thought.

"Are your beliefs simply ethical," he asked, "or are you religious in the usual acceptation of the word?"

"I suppose I understand you," she replied. "I think if I could not say that I am religious I should not be here to say anything. I have stood in places where ethical culture and humanitarianism would not have saved me."

"Such testimony interests me very much," he answered, "especially from a young and beautiful woman."

Clover colored with surprise at this bluntness. She need not have shrunk. Page was as usual

making an impersonal statement as nearly accurate as possible.

"I have not a particle of doubt," he continued, "that there is a world of causes, and that ours is a world of effects. Why should not the universe have a soul as well as the human body?"

"Yes; only you do not state it well," returned Clover, entering into his spirit of analysis. "It is not the body that has the soul, but the soul that has the body and will be through with it after a while."

Page bowed. "I agree to that. I believe in immortality. We have been sent upon this plane of existence; and to find out why is a problem of daily interest."

"Yes. Our wishes were not consulted when we came, and will not be consulted when we go. It seems evident enough to me that we are being sent to school."

"Some of us appear to learn very little, though," remarked Page.

"Some of us are set one lesson many times," answered Clover slowly, "until we learn it. The hand must be unclasped many times before we learn to relax our rigid hold on what we have considered our own. It is one great lesson of life, I have found, to learn to be relaxed. You know how much is said now by physical culturists on the subject of letting go abnormal tension of the muscles of the body. Is n't the correspondence interesting? We can only have spiritual self-posses-

sion when we relax the tension of our own wills and let the divine will sway us."

"We are free agents, though," objected Page, "and we must behave as if our own wills were all-powerful; else we should never accomplish anything."

"Oh yes," agreed Clover; "but if one is firmly convinced that the higher Power is omniscient, there is all the time an undercurrent of acknowledgment that one is being directed, and it becomes second nature to ask for the direction in all sorts of wordless ways."

"You believe in that sort of Providence, then?" asked Gorham curiously. "I believe every one has a God — his own God."

"Yes; my God is a Father who thought it worth while to create me, and therefore, I am sure, thinks it worth while to lead me through all the ways I am to traverse. He is close to me all the time. Whether I feel that I am close to Him, depends entirely on myself."

Page regarded the speaker a moment in silence. Her face looked near to heaven then, he thought. "Such faith comes more easily to women than to men, apparently," he said at last.

"Why should it? How strangely people behave and talk, or rather avoid talking of spiritual things as if such subjects were superstitious. I suppose perhaps it is because I have had so many dear ones slip away into the other world that it seems so real to me. It has often been said that death

is the only certain event which we can count on; but people will cease to shrink from it only when they cease to think of it as death. No wonder the love of life is strongly implanted. It is all we need look forward to. The loneliness we have to suffer here," Clover paused a moment, "is a part of the schooling."

"You have made good use of your experiences," observed Page.

"Not always," returned the other. "Nevertheless, I believe that is the chief thing we have to do, — to learn something above worldly wisdom from our experiences little and great."

"So your theory regarding success and failure would simply be to decide its real nature by its spiritual effect on a man."

"Yes," Clover smiled. "You have thought of that before or you would not have grasped so quickly what I meant."

Her visitor nodded. "Yes, I have had a similar thought. The greatest apparent success may amount to a failure if it make a man more arrogant and selfish than before; and the most dismal failure is a success if only it brings with it an interior humility and willingness to be taught."

They talked another quarter of an hour before Page arose and took his leave. He left his compliments and farewell for Miss Bryant, shook hands with Clover, and reached the door of the room before he started and turned back with sudden recollection.

"Why didn't you remind me?" he said reproachfully. "I have n't done my errand."

Mrs. Van Tassel smiled. "Priscilla's part was a passive one, if I recollect rightly."

"But you also recollect the rough temper of Captain Standish. I think you are rather cruel."

"Oh, failure might have given you true humility."

"I make plenty of failures, thank you. Please don't let this be one of them, and don't judge Jack's intensity of interest by my own. May I sit down once more?" Page knotted his brow reminiscently. "Jack outlined a plan for me. He suggested a number of arguments with which I was to lead up to the main idea, but they are pretty well muddled in my brain now." Gorham gave a short, desperate laugh. "After this confession of weakness, Mrs. Van Tassel, you will be obliged, if only out of generosity, to send me back with a 'yes.' Now, let me see; I 'm confident this ought not to come first, but Jack wanted me to say that he was certain that Uncle Richard left the homestead to him instead of to you, at your own instigation."

Clover, who had not been able to imagine what was coming, acquiesced gravely. "Mr. Van Tassel would probably have acted as he did in any case, but I wanted to make certain that Jack's dear old home should be secured to him."

"It humiliates Jack to feel that you avoid the place for fear he might go there."

"This *is* an unpleasant errand for you, Mr. Page."

"Please don't use that tone. Jack means so well, I could n't refuse to be the go-between. He asks, he even begs, that if you intend to remain in Chicago now, you will go back to your home. It is comfortable. All your belongings are there. His father made every arrangement for you. Jack feels sure he would be grieved to have you leave it. He himself is going back to Boston. The housekeeper is alone there and is pining for you; I forget whether that was to be an argument, but the fact remains. Jack thinks it would save a lot of talking among your friends if you were to go on in the old way. Naturally, he has no use for such a big place. It would be too lonely to endure under the circumstances, and it is hardly the thing to leave the house tenantless year after year. Of course all this is under Jack's supposition that you have no prejudice against the home as a home. If that is false" —

"No. I have a strong attachment for the locality and the house itself. Mildred has also."

"Then you will say yes; and I will promise to take my success as meekly as you could desire."

"Shall I do it, Mr. Page?" asked Clover, looking perplexed.

"By all means, if you ask me. Here is the Fair coming on, and the difficulties of suiting one's self in a home in Chicago are going to be many, I fancy."

"I don't want to think of that. We should be able to find a comfortable place."

"Then consider that suggestion unmade, and let me take your consent to Jack. Do you still hesitate?"

"Yes. I had quite made up my mind to do without Jack, and this would change all that."

"Jack does not at all wish to be dispensed with."

"I consider," said Clover with grave gentleness, "that I owe him any favor he chooses to claim; but it seems quixotic on his part to call this one."

"And yet he does. We cannot always understand the vagaries of youth, Mrs. Van Tassel."

"Jack was always willful," she returned, smiling sadly. "Tell him I thank him, Mr. Page, and that Mildred and I will talk it over."

An hour after Gorham's departure, a note was brought to Clover. It was from Jack. He said: —

I thank you for considering my proposition. I have a feeling that in the end you will not refuse me. I have suffered for every unjust word I ever said to you, Clover, and now the only peace possible for me is to be in friendly relations with those my father loved. Only when you are living again under his roof shall I feel that I have won his forgiveness as well as yours. The selfish jealousy of you which has made my heart sore has gone, and gratitude has taken its place. We have

both lived long in two years, and suffered much. We can feel for each other.

Forgive your old comrade, JACK.

Clover's tears fell upon this abrupt note, and her heart went out to her friend. She did not need now to talk the matter over with Mildred. She had decided to return to the home by the lake.

Jack went back to Boston without seeing her again; for although he called, the sisters were both away.

CHAPTER XIII.

MAY DAY.

WHAT Chicagoan will ever forget the winter of '92 and '93! It was as though the elements had joined with the majority who frowned down their city's audacious effort. The newspapers recorded the storms and their damage. What an unthinkable thing it was to undertake a World's Fair in such a climate! Certainly if one wanted an allegory of discomfort one had but to visit the Garden City at that season, and witness the teaming through torn-up streets, the building, and the elevating of railroad tracks, while the sense of shortness of time sent men to labor and often to die in exposed places when the mercury was lost below the zero mark. Roads were either iron-bound, or deep in the mud of a thaw, and blizzards descended furiously upon the glass portions of Exposition structures, destroying in an hour the work of weeks.

As the first of May approached, more stinging grew the criticisms upon the authorities who had failed to have the Columbian Exposition entirely ready to keep its engagement; but though on the great day Chicago was still in an undeniably uncomfortable condition of unfinished hotels and

bad weather, the White City rose like a perfect superb lily from its defiling mud, and the great crowd that swarmed into Jackson Park on the morning of May 1st found so much to marvel at that they were good-natured and eager under a chill gray sky, and unmindful of the clinging soil into which they sank at every step.

Jack Van Tassel had arrived in town a couple of days before, and after registering at his hotel had called immediately at his old home.

The girls received him cordially, although he was unexpected. One or two letters had passed between Clover and himself during the winter, and she now asked him to leave his hotel and take possession of his old room. He declined with thanks, stating that his plans did not yet permit of a prolonged stay in the West, and that it would not be worth while to make the change.

"I am afraid he saw that I hesitated when I asked him," said Clover to her sister after the guest had departed. "I wish we had known that he was coming, then we could have thought the matter over and arrived at a decision. I really did n't know whether I was doing a proper thing or not."

Mildred, who had seen and been amused by her sister's perplexity all through the call, laughed mischievously.

"It is an odd thing if you can't invite your son to visit you," she said.

Clover regarded her helplessly, but she could not help smiling too. "I don't know whether we

should be outraging conventionality or not," she repeated. "He will be coming back again in a little while. If only Jeanie had n't deserted us. It was such an inconvenient season for her to be overwhelmed with homesickness, but she said it was the first time that she had not been really needed here."

"You remind me of Iolanthe," said Mildred wickedly. "I could n't help thinking of it all the time Strephon was here." And then she sang: —

"'I would n't say a word that could be construed as injurious,
But to find a mother younger than her son is very curious,
And that 's the sort of mother who is usually spurious;
Tara diddle, tara diddle, tol lol lay.'"

The color rose under Clover's clear skin as she joined reluctantly in her sister's laugh. "Perhaps we had better procure a dragon," she suggested.

"Oh, wait a little," returned Mildred, loath to alter their present mode of life.

But Jack, before he left, had agreed to call for his friends on the morning of May 1st to take them to see the opening exercises in the new city whose completed splendor they had not before beheld.

The three walked down through the grounds in the dull gray weather, and joined the half million of souls who waited in the Court of Honor to see President Cleveland touch the electric button.

Clover gazed at the white magnificence of architecture, and felt a thrill at the solemn stillness per-

vading all, which the fine orchestral music only accented.

"It seems to me like the story of Galatea," she said to Jack. "We are waiting to see the breath of life breathed into the statue."

Van Tassel looked down the Grand Basin to where the heroic Republic stood veiled in white from the eyes of men. The low-hanging sky hung its pall above all.

"I think the button may start the clouds as well as the machinery," he remarked. "They look as though they were only waiting some signal to pour down."

"We shall need a shower-bath to put out the fires of our enthusiasm," exclaimed Mildred, who looked as excited as she felt. "Oh, Jack, are n't you glad you are a Chicagoan? Are n't you glad that we 've gathered goldenrod right in this very spot in front of the Administration Building?"

Jack protested that he shared this subtle joy fully; and at the moment a new shiver of expectation passed through the throng. The music had ceased. The President had begun to speak. It was a solemn moment, a triumphant moment, when at last the electric button was pressed, hitherto motionless machinery suddenly throbbed, and the vast pulses of the stately, statuesque White City began to beat.

Clover and Mildred unconsciously clasped hands, and their breath came fast as they stood facing the majestic Peristyle, its marble columns sur-

mounted by the solemn, glad, immortal declaration: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Jack stood beside them, his head bared before this beginning of a new era; for at the touching of the signal, down fell the veil from the golden Republic, up streamed the enormous jets of water from the fountains; color and movement thrilled along the roofs of the snowy palaces; flags of all nations unfurled gayly from myriad staffs; the boom of artillery thundered from the lake side; and as the multitude, swayed by mighty feeling, rent the air with cheers, the sun burst from a cloud and blessed the scene with new splendor. The World's Columbian Exposition had opened.

Van Tassel accepted Clover's invitation to dinner that afternoon when they reached home, chilled with much standing about in the spring wind.

The impersonal common interest of the day had done much toward reëstablishing the old easy relation among the trio.

"So Jeanie felt a call to visit her own kin, did she?" said Jack as they sat at table. "She is so much a part of the house I miss her."

"Yes; she could not be tempted from her project even by the prospect of the Fair. 'What do I want with the Fair?' she asked contemptuously. 'Chicago's just got unbearable since they started it.' But she wanted me to promise to take her back when all the excitement is over and she

returns to America," said Clover. "Of course we miss her very much; but at present we get on finely."

"Yes," remarked Mildred, "I don't know that Jeanie would be pleased to know how well. I believe she was right. No doubt a person of her sort would be more fatigued than interested by the Fair."

"I was wondering this morning," said Jack, "while we were waiting down there, what Aunt Love would say to it all."

Clover smiled. "I think Chicago and everything connected with it seems as far off to her as the Sandwich Islands;" but as she spoke a novel thought came into her mind, and after Jack had gone she imparted it to Mildred.

"I have had a brilliant idea," she announced.

"That is nothing new," returned her sister. "A quarter, please," holding out her hand.

Clover loftily ignored both the compliment and the request for prompt recompense.

"We can't selfishly keep this comfortable house just for our own two selves the next six months."

"I could, just as easy," returned Mildred nonchalantly, dropping into an armchair. "Are n't you glad now that we have lived a life of resorts for two years, and are not under obligations to anybody? Moreover, that we have n't had time to make any intimate friends anywhere? Why, everybody we know here has either rented his house and fled, or is wondering how servants and

expenses are to be managed through the summer."

Clover looked serious. "I feel that we ought to do exactly what Mr. Van Tassel would do if he were alive."

"Yes, that is so," agreed Mildred promptly; "but I don't see how you are going to find that out."

"Why, it is perfectly plain that he would entertain his near relatives."

Mildred raised her eyebrows thoughtfully. She began to sing softly again from Sullivan's opera:

> "'To say she is his mother is an utter bit of folly,
> Heigh-ho, our Strephon is a rogue!
> Perhaps his brain is addled and it 's very melancholy,
> Tara diddle'" —

"Stop that nonsensical song."

"My dear, Gilbert never writes any nonsense. It gives me the utmost pleasure to warble his lays. He is the only librettist in the world who says just what he wants to say, and it happens to rhyme. Pardon me if I appeared to be personal. That was another happening. So you think you ought to have sonny at home. Anybody else?"

"Certainly. Mr. Page."

Mildred pursed her lips into a noiseless whistle.

"Mr. Van Tassel's sister's child," went on Clover firmly. "He has a right to expect an invitation. What is the matter? Don't you like him?"

Mildred made her favorite grimace of faint

repugnance, and her head dropped to one side. "I've had a good deal of him by proxy," she answered. "I'm very much afraid he's a worthy young man."

"Well, what of it?"

"Oh, you know I can't endure worthy young men," smiled the girl provokingly.

"Jack says he is a noble fellow," declared Clover with dignity.

"Of course; but alas, if that was only one of those things that go without saying! His sister-in-law adores him madly. Well, then we are to have sterling cousin Page. Anybody else? It seems to me you are drawing about us a possibly charming, but certainly unconventional family circle."

"No, no. There are the other Pages. Of course we must ask the married brother, just as much as Gorham, and we are under obligation to Mrs. Page for kindness to you."

"So she is to be the chaperone. Is it your expectation that she will wish to stay here all summer? What a perfect goose you were, Clover, not to have your bright idea before you let Jeanie go. After you have thought up three meals a day for guests, for about three months, your opinion of the brilliance of that idea will probably decline and fall."

"Just wait," said Clover triumphantly. "You haven't even heard my bright thought yet. It is Aunt Love."

Mildred looked into her beaming eyes uncomprehendingly. "It is nothing to me," continued Clover, "whether Mrs. Page stays one week or six. I am going to ask Aunt Love to come and take Jeanie's place all summer."

"Do you suppose she will do it?"

"Yes, I do. I shall ask her, anyway, before one day more passes over my head, — that is, if you agree, Mildred."

"Oh, if I agree!" repeated the latter with light scorn. "I notice you did n't trouble yourself to consult me about Strephon and cousin Page."

"You would like to have Aunt Love, of course," persisted Clover.

"Yes; but she must be sure to bring Blitzen."

There was only one subject discussed throughout the length and breadth of Pearfield, twenty-four hours after Mrs. Van Tassel's letter reached Miss Berry.

Lovina Berry was going to the World's Fair. Pearfield would be represented, after all. It was a dangerous undertaking. Everybody felt that. The postmaster made himself quite unpopular by doubting whether Loviny ran more risk from desperate characters in Chicago than she would in any other large city; but his heretical opinion was accounted for by a well known contrariness of nature.

Many and solemn were the leave-takings and warnings bestowed upon Miss Berry at the outset

of her pilgrimage. She was somewhat astonished herself at her own calmness at the prospect.

"It must be I don't sense it," she declared as she gave her lisle-thread glove a parting wave from the car window. She had planned by letter to have Gorham Page meet her in Boston, and take her to an inexpensive boarding-house where she might remain until she was fitted out for her wonderful trip.

It was a tired and harassed woman that Page met that afternoon, hugging to her, as she stepped from the car, a straining, excited, furry bundle that jumped eagerly to the end of his chain as she permitted him to leap down.

"Such a time as I 've had this day," she ejaculated. "I guess I 've broke most o' the laws ever made by God and man. By good luck I knew the conductor, — he came from near our place, and he, seein' that Blitzen rampaged dreadful in the baggage-car, let me hold him in my lap. I lost my temper before I 'd been out o' Pearfield half an hour, and I have n't found it since. I 'm just tuckered out. Miss Bryant made a great point o' my bringin' Blitzen, but law, before I 'd have the care o' him from here to Chicago I 'd give up the whole undertakin'." Miss Berry looked anxiously at the dog as he bobbed about at the end of his tether as though to expend the energy stored in his lively legs during hours of inaction. "I don't know how I could leave him in Boston," she added, "and yet" —

Page smiled. "You know very well if you left him he would walk on the ties to Chicago. Don't worry, Aunt Love, I 'll send him safely for you. You shall not have any trouble."

Miss Berry looked half hopeful, half incredulous.

"Yes, by express. It will be all right," and Page held open the door of a cab, into which Miss Berry stepped with the nervous and astonished Blitzen again caught in her strong clasp.

"I have n't thanked you a word," she said when the horse had started, "but you can't think what a help it 's been to me to have you manage about the boardin' place and all."

"Hilda would n't hear to your going anywhere but straight to her," returned Gorham.

"Oh, that is too much," exclaimed Miss Lovina, flushing with pleasure; and the warm welcome she received when she arrived at Mrs. Page's dainty apartment completed her relief from care and embarrassment.

"I 'm sure you never counted on Blitzen," Miss Berry said anxiously, in return to her hostess's greeting.

"But I am glad to see him," responded Hilda. "It is well known that a dog who can wag his tail can knock over lots of valuables in a flat, but Blitzen is a safe and welcome guest."

"We 'll let him run in the street all he wants to. Perhaps he 'll get lost," said Miss Lovina, regarding the small animal darkly in spite of the

confiding and questioning gaze he was bending upon her, as though begging to understand to-day's erratic movements.

"Much more likely to be stolen," remarked Gorham. "I had better send him on to Chicago very soon."

Mrs. Page proved of great assistance to Miss Berry in adding the right articles of dress to her wardrobe, and completing her preparations. It was with a light heart that Aunt Love finally shook hands with Page after he had settled her comfortably in her section of the Chicago train, and when the latter glided slowly and smoothly from the station, Miss Berry leaned back in the cushioned seat and felt happy though excited. She had never been in a sleeping-car before, and every convenience about her excited her wonder and admiration.

She was traveling at Mrs. Van Tassel's expense, and simply followed the explicit directions Page had given her; so she went into the dining-car for her meals, a proceeding which filled her with wonder. Her practical soul yearned to examine the compact kitchen arrangements.

Gorham had charged the porter to attend to her wants, accompanying the exhortation with the only sort of persuasion which appeals to the species, and innocent Aunt Love was in consequence gratefully impressed by her new friend's assiduous attentions.

There is no denying that the gentleman of color

had something to endure from the time the train crossed the last state line and entered Illinois. It had been impressed upon Miss Berry that she was to alight at Hyde Park, and her porter earned the money Mr. Page had given him before that station was reached.

"You don't want to get out till you 've passed the World's Fair," he said at last in desperation; and Miss Lovina clung to this definite clue with such concentration that when the usual stentorian announcement was made — "World's Fair Buildings on the right," she scarcely cast a glance toward the labyrinth of roofs and domes, but clasped the handles of her bag and shawl-strap, and sat on the extreme edge of the seat.

Soon the porter arrived, took possession of Miss Berry's belongings, and in another minute she stood on the platform, where Mrs. Van Tassel and Miss Bryant met her with open arms.

At least one of Mildred's hands was extended in welcome. The other kept firm hold of a chain to which Blitzen was attached. Instantly the little dog's leaps and grins monopolized the attention of all three. He whined, he actually howled in the fullness of his joy at finding the mistress he had despaired of seeing again.

"For gracious sake!" exclaimed Miss Berry, much embarrassed. "There, there;" she stooped and patted the terrier sparingly. "Yes, here 's my trunk-check, Mrs. Van Tassel. My, but you do look well, child. For pity's sake, Miss Mil-

dred, take the chain off'n that dog, and maybe he won't trip me up. Be still, can't you?"

Mildred laughed as she stooped and unfastened the hook from the smart new collar which had gilded Blitzen's misery since his arrival. "Yes, he will not need chains now," she answered; "but we have had to keep him a prisoner for fear he might go back to Boston. It would have been such a pity for you to cross each other on the way."

CHAPTER XIV.

CLOVER'S INVITATION.

THOSE who wished to continue to point out the defects in Chicago and her Fair had ample opportunity through a large part of the month of May. It was indeed Chicago's Fair then; no one else claimed it. The exhibits were not all in place, the electric effects were not complete, the weather was cold, Orientals had to wear American overcoats above their white gowns, and they sneezed lugubriously under their turbans. The pleasantest spots in the White City at that season were the open fires in the dignified or dainty club-houses known as State buildings. Only the Eskimos were really comfortable, and some of those poor women wished the incoming and outgoing visitor would not allow the northeast wind continuous entrance to their homes.

But the month was nearly out by the time Miss Berry arrived in Chicago. It was the beginning of that marvelous summer whose weather every Chicagoan will always proudly consider an exhibit worthy to be ranked with any wonder it shone upon. The natural elements, like the human ones, gradually admitted that the Columbian Exposition was not only a worthy but an overwhelming suc-

cess, and in place of buffeting wind and destructive storm, sent week after week a warm blue sky and a cool east breeze to add the crowning charm to the White City's bewildering loveliness.

Had the human element been as prompt in succumbing, thousands of those who strove in the madding crowd of October might have reveled instead in the fresh beauty of June; but the general confidence had not yet been gained. The same journal which had pictured the vulgar young city vociferating for the World's Fair bouquet had not yet declared that it took off its hat to Chicago, adding that all other shows bore the relation to the Columbian Exposition which Jersey City did to Imperial Rome. A comparatively small army of explorers came from the East as yet, to spy out the land and carry back reassuring reports to their skeptical or timid friends.

Miss Berry, in her comfortable, novel quarters, was from the first charmed with her surroundings. The bright bracing air, the frequent tally-ho coaches that passed the door, their scarlet-coated buglers piping with cheerful unsteadiness, the expanse of tumbling blue-green water that constantly gladdened her eyes, all seemed as festive as the fine house which was her temporary home. She enjoyed the playing of the orchestra every morning on the piazza of an adjacent hotel, and was soon able to hum "After the Ball," that unavoidable, omnipresent accompaniment of the World's Fair summer.

Only one thing puzzled her for the first few days

after her arrival, and this perplexity she set at rest one cool evening, by watching her opportunity and walking clandestinely to the sands at the back of the Chicago Beach Hotel. Here she stooped to the water's edge, dipped her finger in an incoming wave and transferred it to her mouth. Tasting it critically, she looked thoughtful, and after a moment repeated the operation.

"I suppose I 've got to believe it," she murmured, rising. "'T ain't salt."

The more cultivated and traveled one was, the more wonderful and beautiful the White City seemed to him. Upon a woman of Miss Berry's narrow worldly experience, its unique characteristics dawned but slowly. For some weeks it is quite certain that the housekeeping duties which Clover at once placed in her hands were more attractive to the good woman than the marvels which lay so near her. She was not insensible to the privilege of being within walking distance of Jackson Park, and now and then she made pilgrimages thither.

"It 's somethin' like knowin' there 's a big plum puddin' standin' near by, and that whenever I want to, I can go and pull out a plum;" she said; "but law! it would take a whole lifetime to see what they 've got down there, and every time I go I realize it more."

Clover carried out her hospitable intention as soon as Aunt Love was fairly domesticated; and one morning a letter from her was handed to Mrs. Page at her breakfast-table.

Her family had just been talking about the World's Fair, and Jack had been answering questions concerning the best locality in which to secure accommodations.

"There is nothing like having an ardent Chicagoan in the house to make one attend to these matters in time," remarked Mrs. Page.

"I am very much afraid you will find you are not in time," returned Jack discouragingly. His advice, given a couple of months before, had not been heeded, and he now proceeded to state a series of facts and figures which were rather appalling.

"You will have to do something about it, Jack," remarked Mrs. Page's husband, who is not so designated on account of any inferiority. He was a stout, sandy-haired individual with a good digestion and disposition, who was accustomed to allow Hilda and Gorham to think for him in all matters not related to the wholesale dry-goods business in which he was engaged. "You say we ought to see the Exposition," he went on placidly, "and it is your affair, in the interests of hospitality, to tell us where in — Chicago we can find the proper quarters."

"I impressed upon you some time ago that you ought to attend to it," returned Jack rather stiffly. The air of lightness and condescension with which his cousin always treated the subject of the Fair grated upon him.

"Yes, he did, you know, Robert," declared Mrs.

Page, always inclining, like most of Jack's feminine friends, to side with him.

It was at this juncture that the arrival of the mail created a diversion, and Hilda opened Clover's letter.

She glanced down its pages. "Why, how lovely! How kind!" she ejaculated from time to time. "Listen to this. You are all interested. It is from Mrs. Van Tassel."

MY DEAR MRS. PAGE, — I have been wishing for some days to find the right moment in which to thank you for your kindness both to Aunt Love and me in rendering her so much assistance in coming to us. She seems happy and at home already. I am the more pleased to have secured her that it makes it easy for me, in the absence of my old housekeeper, to entertain guests during the coming eventful summer. I hope you and your husband have not already committed yourselves to another plan for seeing the Fair, for our house is most conveniently situated, and my sister and I would be pleased to have you come to us. Will you extend my invitation to your brother as well? As for Jack, it is not necessary, I am sure, for me to write a separate invitation to him. His room is ready for him, and I count upon his taking possession of it for as long a time as he can make it convenient. Indeed, I wish you all four to choose your own times and seasons for coming, for I have no plan to entertain any one else, and I beg you

to consider the house always open to you, and a sincere welcome always ready.

Mildred wishes me to send you her love, and we both hope soon to receive favorable word of your plans. Cordially yours,

CLOVER B. VAN TASSEL.

Mrs. Page, upon finishing, let her pleased gaze rove from one to another of her three companions. Jack's face was eager and happy, Gorham's interested, but her husband was the first to speak.

"I foresee that I am going to fall in love with that woman," he remarked, breaking open his third muffin and handing his cup to the maid for a second cup of coffee. "That is a charming letter."

"Just an ordinary Chicago production," said Jack exultantly. "What do you say, old Reliable?" he added, turning toward Gorham.

"We are in great luck," returned the latter.

"Now, I will admit," said Jack, "that I have been trying to provide for us all at the Chicago Beach; but I will cease my struggles gratefully."

"When do you want to go, Hilda?" asked Robert Page.

"When can you go, is a more pertinent question," she answered.

"July will, I suppose, be the best time. Would it be heresy, Jack, to inquire if the thermometer in Chicago rises above sixty-five degrees in July? I have understood that it does."

"I know of no city in the country where there is no hot weather in summer," returned Jack shortly. "Chicago is, however, a summer resort."

"I suppose you mean a place where summer resorts. That is what I have heard."

"Perhaps you would better not risk your life there."

"Tut, tut, my boy. I am going to see the writer of that whole-souled letter."

Jack, who had already excused himself from the table, here left the room without deigning a reply, and Mrs. Page immediately looked toward her brother.

"What do you think, Gorham? Of course this is a delightful invitation, but ought we to accept it?"

"I don't quite see your objection," he answered.

"It is charming of Mrs. Van Tassel, but it is so evidently a sense of duty which impels her to give such an invitation to a mere acquaintance like me, and a stranger like Robert."

"Look here," remarked the latter, looking up vaguely. "I don't think I want any flaws picked in that invitation."

"Now you keep still, Robert, like a dear. You don't know her at all, and Gorham does. She is just doing this in Uncle Richard's name; I know it, and I am not willing to impose upon her."

"May I see the letter once again?" asked Gorham.

"Certainly;" Mrs. Page handed it to him with

alacrity. He read it through from beginning to end. It sounded like Clover. He could hear her pleasant voice in every phrase.

"She is a thoughtful, deliberate sort of person," he said as he handed the letter back. "Whatever her motive is, it is a sufficient one, and one thing that would influence me to advise you to accept is the effect on Jack. Their relations have been a little strained, and I think it would make things still pleasanter than they are now, if Mrs. Van Tassel and Miss Bryant were to become better acquainted with his people."

"Yes, that is what I think," remarked Mr. Page; but his wife frowned upon him.

"You, and Robert, and Jack, go," continued Gorham. "I won't. That would be rather too much of a good thing; but I can get a room at the Beach Hotel, and that is near by. I propose to spend a good deal of time at the Fair. I want to go through it with some degree of thoroughness. Of course no one will really see half of it. I understand that, giving one minute to each exhibit, it is estimated that it would take thirty-two years for a man to get around."

His brother groaned. He was stout and not energetic save in the matter of wholesale dry-goods.

"Thank Heaven it won't take thirty-two years to see Mrs. Van Tassel," he remarked devoutly.

There were no doubts or scruples in Jack's mind as to accepting his invitation, at least for the present. Indeed, this reconciliation between himself

and the Bryants, as he still often found himself calling his old friends, altered the whole trend of his life. He felt a new satisfaction in living; a new desire for home; a willingness which amounted to necessity to shake the dust of Boston from his feet, and once more to make of Chicago a permanent abiding-place. His sense of loneliness, an aching one still at times, abated. His own place waited for him. The friendship of these cousins, kind and helpful in their way, could never be to him like that of those girls, the only sisters he had ever known, who had so long divided with him his father's affection and care. He was going home. It was the first sensation of the sort that he had had for years.

He did not try to conceal his satisfaction from Mrs. Page when he said to her his *au revoir*. He expressed sincere gratitude for her kindness and hospitality, but she saw that he was not sorry to have no plan for returning to Boston, and felt a little piqued despite Jack's enthusiasm over the plan which would soon make them a reunited family party.

"I have not seen Jack so gay since Uncle Richard died," she said that night to Gorham.

"No. His alienation from Mrs. Van Tassel and her sister has worried him a good deal, I know," responded Page. "This final burial of the hatchet must be a great relief to a fellow so sensitive as Jack is."

But this explanation was not sufficient to account

to Mrs. Page for Van Tassel's jubilant spirits. He had not sprung up three stairs at a time, and whistled and sung over his packing, just because of obtaining the forgiveness of two young women whose feelings he had outraged.

"Men are stupid," she soliloquized. "I *know* that Jack is in love."

With this truly feminine solution of her cousin's conduct she was the better satisfied because she would so soon have opportunity of verifying her own perspicacity by ocular proof. But her diagnosis would have been a surprise to Jack. No lover-like haste mingled with the impatience he felt at the lateness of his train on the June afternoon when he reached Chicago; and when finally he found himself on the familiar home street, even its unfamiliarity seemed representative of the pleasant new state of things which had come into his life. His flying visit during the bad weather of six weeks before had not shown the old neighborhood in its present finished condition.

Van Tassel smiled as a coach and six rattled by him, the notes of its "mellow horn" breaking in impertinently upon the strains of an orchestra at the adjacent fashionable hotel. "Can this be quiet little Hyde Park?" he asked himself.

How the long June evenings of his boyhood came back to him as he sauntered down the changed street! How the thrushes used to sing here at this hour! How the boys and girls who could muster anything to navigate, from a scow to a trim canoe

or sailboat, used to launch their craft, early in these long evenings, and sometimes lashing the boats together, a dozen in a row, would drift over the rocking waves and sing by the hour beneath a moon which electricity had not yet forced out of a long-established business!

The wild shore was changed, cultivated, and trimmed into order according to fashion now, like the young people who once disported over it in free country fashion.

Jack could not whistle the scrap from "Carmen" against the insistent rhythm of "After the Ball" which was being performed by a uniformed functionary from the hotel who passed him under the old familiar elms.

But Clover was on the piazza to meet him, a gracious genius of home in her blue gown, with the welcoming light in her eyes.

"I told you not to stay for me," said Jack, coming up the steps, his hat in his hand.

"I know," returned Clover, looking down into his happy, handsome face. "I stayed for my own sake as well as yours. I have been at the Fair all day, and did not feel like going down this evening. Mildred went from town with the Ogdens on their drag to take supper in Old Vienna. She wished me to give you an extra shake of the hand for her."

"Thank you, Clover," he answered, and he held her hand a moment as they interchanged a look that had in it reminiscence, but reminiscence from

which all bitterness was gone. The sweet summer air seemed throbbing with their love for him with whom every part of this home was connected.

Miss Berry appeared at the house door. She started at the pretty tableau she saw, and the pure white Christmas when she pleaded for this woman with a heart-sore man passed like a vision across the fair June scene.

She would have withdrawn, but Van Tassel saw her. "How do you do, Aunt Love?" he said, and then she came forward to return his cordial greeting.

"Isn't this a queer thing, for me to be in Chicago, Mr. Jack?"

"It is just as it should be," he returned. "Now when we get Gorham and Mr. and Mrs. Page here, we shall be a complete party."

"Mr. and Mrs. Page promise me July," said Clover, "but your cousin Gorham seems to think he would better stay at the hotel. We won't quarrel with him at this distance." She smiled. "Well, Jack, will you go upstairs? Is it to be hammock or Fair this evening?"

"I can scarcely wait till to-morrow for the Fair, yet I don't like to leave you at once."

"Don't mind that. I should enjoy seeing your first view, and should have saved myself for to-night except that I could not escape personally conducting a friend to-day who was very kind to us last year."

"Come in and eat something first, Mr. Jack,"

said Miss Berry, so anxiously that Van Tassel laughed.

"I am sure, Aunt Love, if I have the good luck to meet you in heaven, the first thing you will do will be to urge upon me some manna or angel's food, or whatever may be on the bill of fare."

"Hush, child. Come straight in, for daylight is precious."

"Thank you, but I knew that, and so I took lunch in the train. I expected only to carom on the house as it were, and then make a bee-line for the great show. We did have the first view of it together, Clover, you know."

The dimple dipped in Clover's cheek just as of old. "It will seem different to you to-night," she answered. "That was impressive and solemn; but now — No, I won't be so foolish as to try to describe what is incomparable. I will only say, Go. You will be grateful for whatever feeble standards of comparison you have gained by travel."

CHAPTER XV.

THE COURT OF HONOR.

JACK jumped into a Beach wagon as it rolled along from the hotel, and drove down East End Avenue, approaching the gigantic failure known as the Spectatorium, whose bulky, half-clothed skeleton upreared against the sky like a type of blighted hope.

Following Clover's advice, he entered the Park at the Fifty-seventh Street entrance. A band was playing on its aerial perch above the Eskimo village, and Jack smiled to hear the gay, assured strains of "After the Ball" soaring above a vigorous drum accompaniment. He walked across the bridge and looked down where the Eskimos in their white robes with the peaked hoods propelled their slender canoes noiselessly amid the darkening shadows of the willows.

Straight before him to Michigan's brink stretched an electric-lighted avenue, flanked on one side by State buildings, and on the other by that lion-guarded Greek Palace of Art whose columns, even pictured, send a thrill of grateful delight to the hearts of those who have passed within its portals.

The fresh verdure of the lawns showed living green, as Jack passed on to the right until he

gained the waterside of the Art Building, and there paused to gaze across at the edifices on the opposite shores. Towers and domes of all shapes and sizes showed amid the June foliage. Every beauty of form and tint surrounded him, divided by broad spaces of rippling water. He was in a city of preternatural loveliness. What wonder that a noiseless boat came gliding to his feet in answer to his wish to explore these distant, fairy vistas. He stepped within, and silently the little craft sped on.

The white loveliness of Brazil, the alabaster lace work of the poetical Fisheries, — Van Tassel glanced over his shoulder as they were left behind, and in a minute more the lofty, winged angels of the Woman's Building blessed his sight.

The dainty conceits of Puck and the White Star melted from his vision to make way for the glories of the Horticultural treasure house, surmounted by its illuminated crystal dome. Lilies, red, yellow, and white, were asleep in the stone-guarded lakelet, upon which smiled the wreathed marble beauty of women and babies on the façade; and in contrast, next sprang to life in electric light the alert equestrian figures of cowboy and Indian controlling restive steed, and peering forth into the night.

But an exclamation escaped Van Tassel's lips as the Transportation Building was passed, and the arched grandeur of the Golden Door shone down upon him. The launch turned, and thus

ideally, without sound or effort, he was borne on between Wooded Island and the homes of Mines and Electricity, approaching the vast expanse of the Liberal Arts building, only to turn smoothly again beneath the bridge, and glide on toward that Mecca of all Exposition pilgrims, the unique Court of Honor.

Jack had stood there once in a still, chill time of waiting, and had seen the dead marble city quickened to life. Now the heart which began to beat that day had made all the whiteness to glow. He forgot to breathe as, passing beneath the last bridge, he emerged where the sea horses reared wildly above cascades that went splashing down the stone steps beneath Columbia's triumphal barge.

Through pink and purple, the rippling opaline water in the Grand Basin was losing its sunset hues, and paling, as the fairy boat passed on. The gold of the statue of the Republic was turning to silver. The figures on the snowy palaces that faced the four sides of the lagoon still stood white against the darkening background. Angels poised on soft, strong wings, seemed vivified as the day died. Jack saw their beckoning hands through a mist. He heard the penetrating tones of their silver trumpets through the lingering sweetness of a serenade that proceeded from a distant pavilion. Strange influences were about him, and he was glad that no mortal friend stood by.

His father had worked and planned and striven

for this. Did he see the result? Could he know the success that had crowned the efforts of his confrères?

Suddenly, across the spontaneous regret that sprang in Jack's heart at the realization of what Death had snatched from his loved one, came an idea which was like a glimpse of new light. Since such a miracle of beauty as now lay about him was possible in this lower world, might it not be indeed true —

Jack's thoughts became confused. They had followed so long and yearningly out into that unknown country where his father had gone, and about which he had never before troubled himself, that he had grasped for his own consolation a belief that it was a reality; and now something in this stately and beautiful place built with men's hands made him recall vaguely the Bible declaration: —

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

It was with reverence and a species of awe that Van Tassel gazed about him. The Court of Honor had given him his first approach to a realization of the possibilities of the Celestial City.

Only gradually the details of his surroundings impressed him. His boat glided toward the Peristyle, and he began to notice that the water was picturesque with gondolas, propelled by their bright-sashed oarsmen.

Beneath a massive arch he could look out upon the great lake, his lake, his old playmate, now grown grandly alien as guardian of this mystical city. He knew every tone of its voice. He had braved it in its stormy strength, and gone to sleep at night to its lullaby.

Now its surf, breaking against the outer stones, appealed to his moved heart in the song of a past gone forever, and he did not know whether its proximity, the voice of this single friend in a place of strangers, gave the crown of pain or of joy to his tender ecstasy.

And now the royal palaces so lavishly decorated with painting and sculpture began to assume their further nightly decoration of jewels. Tiny incandescent lights ran swiftly in diamond necklaces and diadems about cornice and pediment of buildings, and glittered in long lines close above the waters of the lagoon. The crown of the Administration dome shone out in immobile fire, while torches of flame, "yellow, golden, glorious," flared across its façades.

Van Tassel had no well-meant descriptions of this view to contend against. No one had endeavored to prepare him for what he was to see. To him these wonders were appearing for the first time; one after another spontaneous, unexpected change of scene forming a *crescendo* of loveliness. More and more unreal grew the fairy spectacle. Less and less did he try to realize the impossible fact that he was in a familiar locality.

He left the boat mechanically because his quiet fellow-passengers — figures also of a dream — did so; and when he paused again, he was standing near a giant horse and plowboy near the water's edge. Behind him stretched the spaces of lawn in front of the Liberal Arts edifice, softly green in the rays of many arc-light moons. He gazed westward toward the Administration Building, before which three great fountains played, and suddenly its regal jeweled dome became more splendid in the surrounding darkness. The cameos upon its surface shone out clear-cut and white in the night. A moment thus, then the carving disappeared, and again the electric jewels stood alone against the sky. That magic, all-revealing light flitted to rest upon the great central fountain where the Muses propelled the barge of Progress through musically plashing waters; and while the erect figure in the chair of state still looked proudly out into the night, all other brightness faded. Even the jewels vanished. The palaces stood dark and mysterious beneath the stars. All at once a light was thrown upon the group which surmounted the Peristyle.

Columbus in his four-horse chariot shone white above the shadowy columns, driving in from the broad waters toward distant, glowing, advancing Columbia.

Van Tassel, spellbound, yielded still more to the mystery of the place and hour, and a subdued murmur caused him to glance again westward.

The fountains which flanked the great barge on either side had ceased to play, while a strange beam of light shot heavenward from either one. At last at the foot of the beam a bright liquid bubbling began, which seemed to gather strength, and at last leaped from both fountains high in air. This vivid red changed to violet, to gold, to emerald, to molten silver, breaking in brilliant showers and mists. Apart from the lofty middle jet in each one, circled low whirls of bright water with such swiftness as to stand like sheaves of wheat placed in a ring about the central cascade.

Van Tassel wished to have a fairer view of both fountains, and changed his position to another side of the great horse. Around him were other shadowy beings whom he did not regard. Near his new standpoint and rather in his way was a woman seated. He did not look to see upon what she sat. In his present state of mind he would have supposed it a throne had he thought about it at all; but he did not think about it, and the throne was in his way, so he unconsciously leaned slightly upon it in his effort to see.

The figure in the chair turned her head. "Did you find them?" she asked, then added coldly, "Excuse me," and turned back again.

Van Tassel started like a somnambulist wakened from sleep. Another familiar voice had spoken to him out of the past. At the same moment the search light which had been upon the Quadriga sped to the angel above the pediment of

the Agricultural Building. So light her poise, so strong her wings, so beneficent her outstretched arms, it seemed impossible in that mystical irradiation that she should not quit her lightly touched support and float downward to waiting mortals.

A need for sympathy upsprang in Van Tassel's heart. Involuntarily he spoke: —

"Is that not beautiful, Mildred?"

"Jack!" The exclamation in amazed tones as the girl sat up alertly in her wheeled chair. "I was just wondering if you had come. When did you arrive?"

He took the hand she offered. "I don't know," he answered slowly. "Do you see that angel?"

"Indeed I do. That is my angel."

"Our angel then. Let me share it."

"You shall," replied the girl generously. She waited a moment in smiling silence; "but that is n't our hand," she added at last. "That is mine. Have n't you had it a good while, considering it is a loan?"

"Have I? Well," and Jack slowly released it.

"I am in dreamland, Mildred. I am glad to meet you here, whether you are a reality or not."

"Oh! You remind me of those creepy shades in Vedder's picture where one asks the other who he is and the second answers shiverily that he does n't know. 'I only died last night,' is what he was inconsiderate enough to reply. I have never forgiven him."

Jack stood at her side and leaned an arm on the back of her chair.

"This is a sort of No Man's Land too," he answered, "and when it grows dark here one feels that these marble creatures gain life. See that population on the Peristyle! They belong here. We are only strangers."

"I see the spell of the White City is upon you, else you would certainly express some surprise at finding me alone."

"It is only one of the good and wonderful things that have befallen me to-night. It seems perfectly natural. I needed you, Mildred. I needed some tie to the time in which life was worth living to assure me that it is so still, and that there is perhaps more use in it than there would be in sinking into the opal water and dying rapturously in this enchanted place."

"Why Jack, kindred spirit; you have it as severely as we have!"

The girl extended her gloved hand impetuously, and Van Tassel accepted it with alacrity.

"Are you going to take it away again immediately?" he inquired, slowly waking to the situation. "I was enjoying holding it before more than I realized until I was bereft. One must have sympathy in a place like this."

"Oh I know it," she said, speaking hastily as she withdrew her hand and looked over her shoulder apprehensively, "and I am afraid every second that Mr. Ogden will come back. When our party left Old Vienna, we separated and promised to rendezvous by the plow-horses, *I* thought,

but Mr. Ogden understood that it was to be at the Liberal Arts entrance, and he has gone now to see if they are there. My chair-boy is over yonder resting his weary bones on the steps. I never can endure to have the poor things stand around any more than they have to."

"I trust the Liberal Arts entrance is a sufficiently ambiguous term to detain our friend some time," returned Jack. "Is n't there some white magic that could be practiced on him? Of course no black art would be possible here, but I must say I should have to come down by easy stages before I could converse with Ogden to-night, and I don't want to leave you."

"I don't want you to, either. I — I especially don't. And I told Mr. Ogden that if we met you here I should have to go with you — Yes, I put it that way, for I told him we expected you, and it was n't quite the thing for me to come away; but of course I had n't the least idea we *should* meet you."

"And you told him that too, I suppose," remarked Jack dryly, all his dreaminess departed. "You declared it would be your duty to go with me if we did meet, but of course such a calamity for Ogden was improbable. I know just how you put it. Girls know how to smooth a man the right way. Now that we have met, and Ogden is out of the way, you tell me you especially want me to remain with you, and don't want him."

Mildred looked up at the speaker, and after a moment burst into a mirthful laugh.

"Where is our angel?" she asked.

Jack glanced across the lagoon, but all was shadow save for the rosy glow in the colonnade of the Agricultural Building.

"Vanished!" exclaimed Mildred. "Frightened back by your naughty temper just as she was about to fly down to us."

"I don't like to think of you as the least bit of a coquette," said Van Tassel.

"Then don't. It is extremely disrespectful. Oh, Mr. Ogden, you are back again. The unexpected always happens, you see, and truth is stranger than fiction. Here is Mr. Van Tassel, after all."

"Well, Jack." The two men greeted each other, each endeavoring to conceal his dissatisfaction. "It *is* possible to find a needle in the haymow, then," said Ogden. "Miss Bryant told me you were expected about now. Your first visit? What do you think of our little show?"

"Can't say yet," returned Jack shortly. "I am just going to see another part of it."

"The fireworks, I suppose. They will start, now the fountains have stopped."

"Fireworks? No!" exclaimed Van Tassel in genuine repugnance. What sacrilege for pyrotechnics to paint the lily! His eyes fell upon a revolving globe of light inside a window of the Electricity Building. Its color changed with each revolution. "I think I will wander over in that direction," he said.

"The fireworks are always fine," remarked Mildred. "Are you sure you would not prefer to come to the lake shore and see them? The reflections in the water give beautiful effects." As she spoke, the girl left her wheeled-chair.

"Oh, don't rise, Miss Bryant," begged Ogden hastily. "I will find our pusher. The rest of the party did understand that we were to come to the Liberal Arts entrance. They will meet us at Baker's Chocolate House."

"Don't let me detain you," said Van Tassel courteously. The electric jewels were again running in lines of light around the buildings. Jack could see the expression in Mildred's face as she stood before him.

She waited a moment and Ogden stepped aside to find the guide.

"I don't want to see a rocket go sputtering over this place," explained Jack, for the girl's eyes demanded something.

She gave a short laugh. "You poor, provincial Bostonian," she remarked. "Go your way; and when you discover what the fireworks of the White City really are, perhaps your fastidiousness will not be shocked. Certainly, Mr. Ogden, I am ready. *Au revoir*, Jack."

"Good-by, old fellow," said Ogden, as Mildred resumed her position in the chair. He was beaming again with relief from the apprehended loss of Miss Bryant's society.

Van Tassel moved away in the opposite direc-

tion from that they took; but no amount of attempted concentration on his surroundings would restore to him the dreamy delight of half an hour ago. He saw continually the reproach and surprise in Mildred's eyes.

"What right had I to take her away from Ogden?" his thoughts protested. "It was all nonsense for her to think that hospitality demanded it."

Then his reflections passed over from the indignant hazel eyes to Miss Bryant's cavalier. The latter's uneasy devotion had been apparent even in the few phrases Jack had heard him say. The eagerly bent head, the short nervous laughs with which he interspersed his sentences told the story; and instantly curiosity leaped up in Van Tassel's heart as to Mildred's real sentiments toward her admirer.

She had said she especially wanted Jack not to leave her to-night. What did that mean? Jack walked a little faster because he suddenly knew that it was the fact that she had said that, coupled with Ogden's lover-like manner which had made him hold aloof.

He had made a point of giving Ogden his chance, and now he felt ashamed of it. Why should he have felt injured because Mildred had a lover? Probably she had a dozen, and what wonder if she had?

He felt humiliated, and convicted of disloyalty. Milly Bryant had wanted defense from something, and had appealed to him in vain.

Jack had passed along the side of the Electrical Building and crossed the bridge to Wooded Island by this time, and, deciding to postpone further exploration, determined to walk straight up through the Cornell Avenue entrance and so home. But as thousands of people know to the cost of their groaning muscles, getting on Wooded Island and getting off it are two very different things. Jack wandered about for some time before he found another bridge, and when he did so, it led off to the east, and his aimless walk brought him to the lake shore. Cannon-like reports were sounding upon the air, and superb bombs bursting high above the water broke into lavish showers of emeralds, rubies, and diamonds. The shore was black with a watching multitude, and Van Tassel found himself drawn to its outskirts to watch and wonder with the rest. Volcanoes and serpents of flame, bouquets of a hundred rockets at once, filled the night with brightness, paling the stars, and illuminating the surging water; and when a succession of fiery white cascades slowly unrolled their graceful curves and stood poised in air, showering a light as of day upon the scene, Jack joined in the cheers that with whistles from a congregation of boats saluted the gorgeous spectacle.

"I 'm a fool," he said, as he resumed his walk northward. "I am sure Mildred would have given me her hand again on that."

CHAPTER XVI.

A MASSACHUSETTS CELEBRATION.

"I SEE by the paper there 's some sort o' doin's at the Massachusetts house to-day," observed Miss Berry to Clover, as the two stood in the dining-room one morning after breakfast was over.

"A day when you ought to visit the Fair then, surely," replied her companion.

"Why, yes. I don't know but I will," returned Miss Lovina ruminatively.

"And you ought to make an early start, Aunt Love. You are not the only loyal Yankee in town."

"Just so," said the housekeeper placidly. "Mrs. Van Tassel, we must have a chocolate puddin' pretty soon. Mr. Jack was fond o' chocolate from a child. I well remember" —

"Yes, I want to hear all about it some time; but you know how hard it is for you to get an early start for the Fair. Let me attend to your department to-day, and you go down to the Massachusetts house and have a good time."

"My dear, I shall get there in good season. Don t you worry a mite. Independence is won. The country 's safe and my bein' on hand at just such a minute don't signify. I 'd rather go through my reg'lar routine. I 'm happier that way."

Thus it was that when Aunt Love stepped leisurely through the Cornell Avenue turnstile, taking her way down between Kentucky and West Virginia and around Pennsylvania's edifice, she saw that the Massachusetts Building was surrounded by a crowd.

"That 's clever," she murmured, in nowise disturbed by the evident fact that she could not approach near enough to hear the speeches. "There 's plenty o' folks to show an interest."

The wreathed façade of New York's palatial home rose beside her, and she ascended the broad marble steps, passed through the hall, and out upon the eastern porch. A fountain plashed coolly in its centre, wicker rocking-chairs stood about, dull blue portières were looped between its pillars. Miss Berry was warm and tired from her walk. The chairs looked inviting. She sank into one of them, and listened to the lulling tone of the fountain while she looked across the street at the more energetic patriots or more curious idlers, who lined the way to the Hancock house in the hope of seeing the dignitaries of the occasion pass in and out.

A fine band stationed in the yard of the mansion began to play inspiringly. As Miss Berry grew refreshed under the influence of the silvery falling water and her comfortable chair, her anxiety to see and hear increased. Her point of view was unsatisfactory, and yet the idea of joining the crowd of spectators was not attractive.

"I wonder if they 'll let you go upstairs in this grand, big place," she pondered. "One o' those blue fellers 'll stop me quick enough if I can't. They know a good deal better what a body can't do than what she can."

Miss Berry might be excused for grumbling. She had made her acquaintance with the Fair City at a date before the Columbian Guards had learned their points of compass; and she would have to become lighter on her feet before she could forgive them the unnecessary walking which their blundering directions had caused her to perform.

She left the shady stone porch, and, passing through the spacious apartment which led to the hall, began to ascend the stairs. No one protested, and she took courage to remark her surroundings.

"The New Yorkers seem to like any color so it 's red," she mused, noting the Pompeian glow of the wall. Of course a Massachusetts woman on this day must not be uncritical of her neighbor's efforts.

But when Miss Lovina entered the banquet hall she stood amazed. Only for a moment, however. It was an unrighteous place. She felt it. She refused to be dazzled by its prismatic glass and its painted cherubs. There was an unholy luxury, a theatrical suggestion about its velvet boxes. Miss Berry, looking straight before her, hastened swiftly as she dared across its polished floor and through the light room beyond, out upon an upper balcony

which overlooked the festivities of her own substantial and respectable State.

Yes, Miss Berry could breathe out here. Coming from the seductive shadow of the dim hall, the sunlight seemed doubly clear. The heavenly blue of the firmament bent above snowy and golden domes, flying flags, and winding waterways, while the bewitching sparkle of Lake Michigan's electric blues and peacock greens seemed more vital as one listened to the rhythmic harmonies poured forth on the summer air by the musicians below. It was a season of delight. The whole atmosphere seemed charged with gayety.

A man leaning his elbows on the rail of the balcony was thinking this when Miss Lovina emerged from the doorway. She glanced at him, then glanced again, then gazed.

"Of course 't ain't him; but if it don't look like him!" she mused.

The more she looked, the stronger grew the resemblance of that back to one she knew. The man was interested in the celebration over the way. Why should she not stand beside him a minute?

Acting on the impulse, Aunt Love also leaned her arm on the rail, and waited a second before stealing a furtive curious look at her neighbor's face. Their eyes met. In a moment both her hands were being shaken.

"For the land's sake, Mr. Gorham!"

"Hurrah for us," he answered, laughing. "To think that I should have come unexpectedly upon

this celebration and you. What more could a Bostonian ask?"

"You might ask to be in the Massachusetts house instead of over here in Gotham."

"I fancy only invited guests go in there to-day; but at any rate I have only just arrived, and this is a fine place for the general effect. So that is the old Hancock house."

"Yes. I remember the real one very well."

"How well the grounds look. I am anxious to get in. You have visited it, of course."

"Yes, I have. I must say to you, Mr. Gorham, I had to laugh to see some o' the stuff they 've put in a glass case over there. I 've got some things in my attic in Pearfield they could have had and welcome."

"Perhaps they would have been glad of them," remarked Page.

Miss Berry laughed. "I never thought before o' puttin' Aunt Jerushy's old calash under glass for a show," she said. "It would 'a' looked simple to me; but there 's papers in one o' the downstairs rooms that are interestin'. There 's no doubt about it. It does make a body's blood boil to see the old superstitions down in black and white, and think o' the past sufferin's of innocent folks. There 's one paper there makin' out a case against some poor critter for havin' dealin's with the devil, 'way back in Salem times."

"I want to see everything in that house," returned Gorham, with anticipatory relish.

"Well, give an account of yourself," said Miss Berry, after a moment's silence. "Have you been to Mrs. Van Tassel's?"

"No, not yet."

"But you are comin', ain't you?"

"To call, certainly."

"But you 've been invited to stay?"

"Yes, I know; but I have taken a room at the Beach."

"Why, what 's that for? Mrs. Van Tassel will think that 's queer."

"She will have guests enough without me."

"It is your Uncle Richard's house," persisted Miss Berry.

"Yes, that is just the trouble," returned Page quietly.

Aunt Love sighed. "Well, I was 'lottin' on helpin' to make you all comfortable."

"I have n't a doubt of it, you dear soul. Be sure that only stern principle drives me from under your wing, and please get me an invitation to dinner soon, won't you? How is Jack?"

"He 's lively. I heard 'em at breakfast talkin' about all comin' down to the illumination tonight."

"I wonder if I might join the party."

"Of course. Nobody knew you were comin' out so soon."

"I did n't expect it myself. It was a sudden determination."

"They are goin' to have their supper down here at six o'clock, I heard 'em say at breakfast,

at the Marine — Caffy, I think they call it. At any rate I know the house first-rate; and if 't wan't for the Art Buildin' I could show it to you from here. It 's brown, and that 's queer enough in this place, and then it 's all covered with candle snuffers. Just as soon as I once sensed it that the Columbian Guards were put here to look pretty and did n't know where anything was, I made up my mind if I did n't learn the g'ography o' the place I 'd be a cripple; so I buckled down to it and I 'm most ready to stand an examination. Miss Bryant told me when I first came down that if I 'd just take the opposite direction to what a Guard told me, I 'd find myself all right; and that did work pretty well, but it 's better yet to know your own way around and not have to make calculations."

Page nodded smilingly.

"It does beat all," Aunt Love went on, "how when you 're at this north end o' the Fair, the Art Buildin' is just across the street from everything. It does seem sometimes as if it had n't any end; and when you once get into it. My!"

"Yes, I suppose so," said Page, "but," he added with the courage of a new-comer, "I propose to see all that 's in it; and speaking of thoroughness, have you looked over this building?"

"I just glanced as I came along," replied Miss Berry cautiously. "It 's pretty worldly and glitterin', just like the folks that built it. That hall in there with the slippery floor" —

"A ball-room, yes. Let us go back and examine."

"Oh, it 's a ball-room, is it!" said Miss Berry, following the young man back into the lofty apartment where sunlight sifting through caught in the prismatic chandeliers and lay in rainbows on the floor.

They stood at the rope-guarded door of the dainty tea-room. Page pointed out to his companion the beauties of wreathed pillars and mural decorations in the lofty hall, but he observed that the light of suspicion still shone in her eyes.

"Let us try the roof, Aunt Love," he remarked. "You can see the Hancock house again from there, and I 'm sure you will be more comfortable."

"Oh, I know this is all elegant, Mr. Gorham, and it 's a great thing to have such riches opened up for everybody to see. Why, downstairs there 's a gold piano, and velvet and silk curtains; but folks don't want to set their hearts on gold pianos and diamond chandeliers. You ain't goin' to take that elevator, are you?" she added, dropping her virtuously impersonal tone for one of anxiety.

"Certainly. You must have learned the importance of economizing steps here."

"Better get lame from walkin' than break your leg in a fallin' elevator," remarked Miss Berry. "Accidents in the papers do scare a body." But she consented to run the risk, and soon was standing beside Page in one of the square towers on the roof, with the Fair City spread out around them.

"I suppose you have visited the Midway," remarked Page, looking over to where the Ferris wheel revolved, slowly and steadily.

Miss Berry threw up both her hands. "Yes, all I want to," she returned sonorously.

"Don't say that. I expect you to pilot me to all the shows."

"You'll be disappointed, then. Civilization 's good enough for me. If I 'd had a call to minister to naked savages, I s'pose I 'd 'a' been given grace to conquer; but to listen to 'em yell, and see 'em dance, is a mighty queer thing for Christians to seek for entertainment, it seems to *me*. If I could go into that Pleasance with plenty o' hot water and Castile soap, and some sensible clothes, and could help those poor critters to a more godly way o' livin' that would be a different thing; but when I want a good time I ain't goin' to try to get it bein' trod on by camels and yelled at by Turks, all the time smellin' smells I don't know the name of and would be afraid to. No, sir."

Page laughed. Miss Berry looked as though Michigan's breezes were powerless to cool her.

"Perhaps the Midway Plaisance is an acquired taste," he said. "You may like it better, later."

"No, I 've seen enough of it if I can't be a missionary, but I 'm glad all the natives have got it warm at last, anyway."

"Which natives?"

"Oh, all those foreign folks. They 're all natives of some place, I s'pose, and they do say

when 't was rainy and cold and muddy they had a forlorn time of it in the Pleasance."

"Yes; we used to read about it, and my brother Robert nicknamed the street then the Mudway Nuisance. We all laughed at the joke but Jack. It is against Jack's principles to jest at sacred things like Chicago and her Fair. I shall have to get him to show me the fine points of the Midway. He won't refuse me."

"No, indeed. There 's plenty that like it. The place gets more crowded every day. Why, Mr. Gorham," Miss Berry dropped her rather sad, musing tone, and spoke feelingly. "That Midway is just a representation of matter, and this great White City is an emblem of mind. In the Midway it 's some dirty and all barbaric. It deafens you with noise; the worst folks in there are avaricious and bad, and the best are just children in their ignorance, and when you're feelin' bewildered with the smells and sounds and sights, always changin' like one o' these kaleidoscopes, and when you come out o' that mile-long babel where you 've been elbowed and cheated, you pass under a bridge — and all of a sudden you are in a great, beautiful silence. The angels on the Woman's Buildin' smile down and bless you, and you know that in what seemed like one step, you 've passed out o' darkness into light." Aunt Love paused thoughtfully. "It 's come to me, Mr. Gorham, that perhaps dyin' is goin' to be somethin' like crossin' the dividin' line that separates the Midway from the

White City. I 've asked myself when I 've passed under that bridge and felt the difference down so deep, what did make it so strong? 'T ain't only the quiet and the grandeur o' those buildin's compared with the fantastic things you 've left behind; I believe it 's just the fact that the makers o' the Fair believed in God and put Him and their enlightenment from Him into what they did; and we feel it some like we 'd feel an electric shock."

Page nodded. "You make me more interested than ever in my prospect of sightseeing," he said. "Now I propose that you show me the way to that café where you say the others will come this evening, and we will take lunch together there. Not a word of objection, Aunt Love. This is a great day. United we stand, divided we fall. Let us charge on the café under the candle-snuffers."

The two friends descended to the street, and Page, submitting to Miss Berry's guidance, was led through the archway running beneath the eastern corridor of the Art Building. "I won't attempt to take you through the buildin' itself," said Miss Berry, "'cause I know well enough I should n't get you through before the middle o' the afternoon; partly 'cause you 'd stop to look at the statuary, and partly 'cause the first thing I always do when I get in there is to lose myself. I 've thought, up to this summer, that I had a pretty good bump o' locality; but land! let me turn around in that place a few times and all those signs, 'East Wall,' 'North Wall,' and the

rest, don't mean any more to me than Greek would. You 'll see how 't is when you try it."

Page was only half listening. He paused by the brink of the water, fascinated by the sparkling, shining, noonday beauty before him. Gondolas were stealing from beneath the bridges, and electric launches passing and repassing silently and smoothly over the changing waves.

"We must get into one of those boats, Aunt Love," he said with enthusiasm.

"You can't sail to the restaurant. That 's right over yonder," observed Miss Berry practically, indicating with her parasol the many-towered roof of the Marine Café.

Page sighed. "Do what you like with me," he answered resignedly. "I can see already that the summer will be too short."

"If your breath ain't, that 's all you need fret about," returned Miss Lovina, as they started eastward, along the bank of the pond. "Many 's the time in the last weeks I 've wished I only weighed one hundred. Don't those ducks and swans have it comfortable?"

Page watched the undulating motions of the pretty birds that eyed them as they passed.

"No, I did n't bring my lunch; had n't the least notion o' stayin'," replied Miss Berry over her shoulder, to the graceful followers who soon veered away, secure of dining sumptuously every day.

"These here steps," remarked Aunt Love, as

she climbed up to Costa Rica's entrance and down on the other side, "do seem an awful aggravation when you 're tired, which I ain't now, of course. There 's no gettin' out of 'em except by walkin' all around Robin Hood's barn."

Page found his companion surprisingly intelligent as to the names of the buildings they passed lingeringly on the way to the café, and once arrived at that haven, they proceeded to take a leisurely lunch, after which Miss Berry allowed herself to be easily persuaded to ride around the lagoon in an electric launch.

Page found so much to interest him in this initial trip, the quiet gliding motion, cool air, and constantly stimulating panorama were so charming, that he scarcely knew when to abandon this certain good for one more doubtful. At last, however, he and Miss Berry found themselves roaming beneath the gilded towers of the Electricity Building. Miss Lovina gazed benevolently and uncomprehendingly upon one and another evidence of marvelous achievement, waiting patiently whenever Page paused to examine and question.

"There 's one place here," she volunteered at last, "where I will say for 'em they 've done a cute thing. They' ve harnessed chain lightnin' so it pulls up and down a zigzag path just as tame as my cow 'll go to pasture. Come and see it, Mr. Gorham."

So Page was piloted through the spectacular southeast portion of the building, where color and

movement thrilled through every phase of intensity, from the steady glow of the living green pillars of the Egyptian temple, to the various whirling globes and wheels, and the racing bubbles of changing light which sped along their irregular tracks.

"Ah, here are the telephones," remarked Page.

"Yes; do you know, Mr. Gorham, till I came to Chicago I 'd never seen a telephone? I find folks don't make anything of 'em here. Mrs. Van Tassel ain't any more afraid of her telephone than she is of her sewin' machine. When I first came I used to jump a foot every time that sharp little bell rung; but I made up my mind that I was havin' advantages, and that I was n't goin' to slight 'em. I made up my mind I was goin' to speak into that box, no matter how fast the chills traveled up my back, and I did it; it makes me as weak as a kitten yet, but I just will be up with the times I live in if I get a chance; and ain't a telephone a perfect wonder now?"

"It is, indeed, and they are improving them all the time. I see there is a long-distance telephone. How should you like to talk to New York?"

"I should n't like to make a fool o' myself that way or any other, Gorham Page."

"But really, Aunt Love" —

"Save your breath, Mr. Gorham. I know this buildin 's full o' queer doin's and it 's a good place to play jokes on a body, but there 's limits to even a greenhorn's credulity."

"I was never more in earnest, I assure you. It is possible to talk to New York."

Miss Berry regarded her companion severely. "Then it 's blasphemous. That 's all I 've got to say."

"Why, I don't see that."

"Do you s'pose the Lord would have put New York a thousand miles away from Chicago if he 'd expected 'em to talk to each other?"

Page laughed. "I never thought of that before as a reason for the antagonism between the two cities. Nonsense, Aunt Love; the world moves, and you must move with it. You shall speak to New York and be proud of yourself ever afterward. You know it is to be expected that science will do everything possible toward annihilating space."

Page ascended the steps toward a silk-curtained cabinet; a uniformed boy opened its glass door.

After remaining in the closet a minute and speaking a few sentences into the telephone, he beckoned to Miss Berry who had remained standing at the foot of the steps looking very apprehensive.

"Now, Aunt Love," he said encouragingly, as she slowly approached, a do-or-die expression on her face. Had Miss Berry been of the Romish church instead of being a "Con'regationalist in good and regular standing," she would assuredly have crossed herself before entering that tasteful little apartment.

Page smiled into his mustache as he placed the

receiver in her hand, fervently wishing that he might hear both sides of the impending dialogue.

"Mr. Gorham," said Miss Berry, addressing him over her shoulder impressively, "think of the miles, the hours, I traveled; the rivers and lakes I crossed; the mountains I tunneled" —

"Yes, yes, Aunt Love; but don't keep our New York friend waiting."

"I feel prickly, Gorham. I think I 'm goin' to faint."

"Oh no, you 're not. Just say Hello," returned Page cheerily, his eyes twinkling.

"Hello," quavered Miss Lovina, and promptly the answer came: —

New York. Is this Miss Berry?

Miss Berry. How did you know my name?

New York. A gentleman just told me to expect you. I am happy to meet you, or to hear you, all the way from New York.

Miss Berry. Go away!

New York. Are n't you a little unreasonable, madam? I 'm a good way off already.

Miss Berry. How am I to be sure you ain't in the next room, sir?

New York. Do you hear me so distinctly?

Miss Berry. It is the most wonderful thing in the world if you are real.

New York. Oh, I am real, I assure you, madam. I see you have been making trips to the Midway, and your confidence in human nature is shaken.

Miss Berry. You 're just right there. I should like to talk to you about the Midway. Have you been to the Fair yet?

New York. No; and alas, I 'm afraid I 'm not coming; but if I do, I 'm going to the Midway the first thing.

Miss Berry. Now, young man, you just stand there a minute, and I 'll convince you — "Hey?" for Gorham was pulling her sleeve.

"There are some more people waiting to speak, Aunt Love."

"What? Oh," Miss Berry looked dazed, relinquished the receiver, and moved like a somnambulist out of the cabinet.

"You might have said good-by to your new friend," suggested Page.

"Mr. Gorham, tell me," spoke Aunt Love beseechingly. "If I was ever good to you, if you ever liked my cookies, tell me the truth. Was that all hocus-pocus, or was it genuine?"

"Why, it was genuine, Aunt Love. It is done every day in business."

"Well," Miss Berry stepped off energetically. "All is, then, I 've capped the climax o' my life. I don't calc'late to ever call anything wonderful again."

But she did. Page took her upstairs to the gallery where a door opened by magic when her foot touched the threshold; where the tel-autograph reproduced a writer's chirography while transmitting his thoughts; where a metal rod, pass-

ing along a person's spine, caused blue flames to leap forth, crackling and spitting in Mephistophelean fashion, a cure which Miss Berry thought worse than any known disease. She saw there, too, the smallest steam-engine in the world, reposing its miniature perfection in a walnut shell, and displaying its exquisite mechanism only beneath a magnifying glass.

But the cooking of food and the hatching of chickens by electricity appealed to Aunt Love so engrossingly that, after repeated vain efforts to woo her away from both these attractions, Page finally took his leave of her there, and his parting view showed Miss Berry gazing through the side of an incubator where chicks were in every stage of existence, from the first thrust of a yellow beak through the eggshell, to the freed and bedraggled little wretch whose sole aim in life seemed to be to half hop and half tumble across the incubator until its wet body rested directly upon an incandescent light. These eventful journeys, with their apparently suicidal goal, so absorbed Miss Berry that she could do little more than wave her hand after Page as he set briskly off for pastures new.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BRONZE BABY.

Somebody says that we only really live when we do not know that time is passing. If that be true, Miss Berry lived intensely during the period she passed in the gallery of the Electricity Building that afternoon.

"I wonder how late it is!" she asked herself at last with a start. "The folks 'll think I 'm lost. I must hurry home directly."

But she sighed as she said it. To "hurry home" from this city of magnificent distances was but a form of words.

"If I could only borrow the wings off 'n some o' those angels!" she murmured as she hastened down the nearest flight of stairs; but doubtful as she was of the lateness of the hour, she could not keep her mind from straying back to the strange scenes in the miniature world she had been watching. Next the incubator had been a little sandy inclosure in the midst of which stood a small curtained house where the young chickens could be brooded at will, and across whose front ran the defiant legend, "Who cares for mother now!"

"I wonder how soon electricity 'll take the place o' folks," she mused, "Seems if 't won't take long.

Yes, yes," she went on in answer to a faint peeping that came from beneath her wrap, " we 'll get home some time to-night," and she hurried faster still, a pleased smile breaking over her face; for Aunt Love was not alone. She had at the present moment one of those emancipated chicks in a pasteboard box pressed to her side.

" I believe I 'll take the Internal Road, and then the cars," she said to herself. " There 'll be an awful crowd at Sixtieth Street, but I can stand consid'able squeezin'. I know I 'm late."

She was late. Not that it mattered. She was to dine in solitary state that evening in any case; but she had meant to reach the house in time to carry the information of Mr. Page's arrival and his plan to meet his friends; and in this she was disappointed. Only Blitzen was left at home to give her his customary boisterous greeting, and she had before her the difficult task of explaining and introducing to him her ball of yellow fluff and impressing its sacredness upon his volatile mind.

Jack was the first to arrive at the rendezvous that evening, and to his satisfaction Mildred was second. She sauntered up to the steps accompanied by a young army officer at whom Jack stared down from his post on the balcony. He had, however, sufficient self-control to swallow his discontent. Mildred had somehow taught him this self-control in the short space of a week, and he managed to walk to meet her with an air of noncha-

lance suited to that with which she slowly mounted the steps after dismissing her escort.

"Who is the military?" he asked lightly.

"A cousin of Helen Eames. He has been showing us over the Battle Ship."

"Indeed? I was there this afternoon too."

"Were you? It is awfully stuffy down below in that museum, is n't it? Our party was glad to retreat to a private room and have a sherry cobbler. Everything is beginning to be crowded now."

"What interests me," said Jack, placing a chair by one of the tables for Mildred as he spoke, "is to know how soon you are going to give me a day."

"Oh, any time," returned the girl as she seated herself.

"Any time! That is what you always say, but when I try to pin you down you slip away."

"Would n't anybody?" smiled the other. There was something about the curves at the corners of Mildred's upper lip and its downward dip in the middle that made her smile more provoking than other girls'.

"There! You are slipping away again."

"No, indeed. I am far too tired and this is too comfortable."

"You have had an engagement every day since I have been here. You can't deny it. What sort of a way is that to treat a guest?"

"You are n't my guest, you are Clover's."

"Clover is a daisy and always was," exclaimed

Jack, regardless of paradox. "She is the sweetest girl in the world."

"Of course," returned Mildred, raising a glass of water to her lips as coolly as though she liked this.

"I ought to have gone with you that first evening," said Van Tassel gloomily.

Mildred set down her glass and looked at the speaker with an unfathomable expression as she spoke slowly: —

> "'There is a tide in the affairs of men
> Which, taken at the flood, leads on to'" —

"Would it, Mildred?" Jack broke in with a sort of earnest excitement. "Would it have led on to fortune?"

The girl colored under the glowing gaze.

"If I had gone with you, would you have had fewer engagements and more time for me since then?"

"How can I tell?" she returned, with a low laugh of enjoyment. Jack was fairly dramatic. He was really entertaining.

"I did n't know exactly what my feeling was then; but I knew afterward," he went on. "Ogden was n't any part of our past. I did n't want to share you with him that night."

"He did n't want to share me with you either, so you were both satisfied," returned Mildred demurely.

"Was he satisfied?" asked Van Tassel savagely.

"Methinks not. I notice that whatever your engagements have been this week, he has not been in them."

"How observing you are!"

"Yes. He is done for. It would be interesting to know how many scalps that makes, Mildred."

"Look here, Jack," the girl was not smiling, and her eyes darkened as she met his; "if you will practice conservation of energy now, I will give you a capital opportunity to air your talents in amateur theatricals next winter. You are the very man we have been looking for."

"Can I make love to you?"

"That depends on your versatility."

"Or my patience in standing in line. I 've been standing in line all the week. Don't you think it is about time I got there?"

"What do you call this?" Mildred gave him a tantalizing glance from under her half-dropped lids. "I arrive early at the rendezvous. We sit *tête-à-tête*, and how do you make use of the time?"

Color flashed all over Jack's face.

"I am a fool," he agreed.

"That must be why you always speak the truth so indiscreetly. I never thought of that as the reason, really. Now let us decide what to order before Clover comes. What can make her so late?"

The fact was that Clover, wanting to stop a minute to look at some pieces of old china and silver in the Louisiana house, had had the usual curious experience in World's Fair minutes. In a

city of enchantment, how could it be expected that sixty seconds should be of the conventional length? She had set aside plenty of time also just to walk through the middle of the Art Building; and as every woman knows, it was always impossible to pass so near "The Young Athlete" without pausing, if but for a brief acknowledgment.

Gorham Page had just been admiring the bronze, and had stepped aside to look at the photographs on a neighboring table when Clover advanced. He was short-sighted, and she wore an Eton suit and a sailor hat, the garb of ninety-nine out of every hundred women in the summer of '93; but he knew her at once, and paused. After a moment's watching he approached her.

She colored faintly with surprise as she returned his greeting.

"The subtle differences in the nature of man and woman are more interesting than the obvious ones," he said.

"What are you leading up to now?" she asked. "I expected your first words to be an explanation or an apology, or both. How does it happen that this is the place where we first meet?"

"You were very, very kind, Mrs. Van Tassel, and I hope I assured you of my appreciation in my letter; but I found I could get a room at the hotel near you, and then affairs taking a favorable turn I left Boston suddenly, and none too soon; none too soon; I have been here all day. How stupendous it is! You are on your way to the Marine Café. May I go with you?"

"Oh, you have seen Jack, or my sister."

"No."

"Then how comes it that you are so well informed?"

"Happily for me, I ran across Aunt Love."

"Oh, that explains her prolonged absence perhaps. Usually it is hard for us to persuade her to spend a whole day down here. We must hurry a little, I think." Clover laughed. "Hurrying is the normal condition of people who try to keep appointments at the Fair."

They threaded their way amid groups and figures in plaster and marble, and emerged from the southern entrance.

"What I started to speak of when I first met you was the contrast of a man's and woman's way of approaching that bronze," said Page. "I went up to it and especially noticed the muscles and veins of the man's hand and the truthful way the fingers sink into the flesh of the baby it supports. You approached it and took hold of the baby's hand and patted his leg. Now why did n't I want to pat that little fellow's fat leg?"

"I give it up," laughed Clover. "I can only say you had very poor taste."

"No, there is a deep reason for the difference. Of course it is a woman's nature to pet a baby."

"What a deep discovery! I congratulate you on the result of your explorations. Do you think you shall write a book about it?"

"I amuse you, Mrs. Van Tassel."

"Yes, you do, I won't deny it." Clover was a trifle ashamed of having been caught in her loving ebullition toward the soft bronze, and was willing to laugh it away.

"Still it is interesting," Page went on musingly, "to observe how affection is outward with women and inward with men."

"That does n't sound complimentary to us, Mr. Page. I hope you mean well."

Gorham's pensive eyes met her merry ones. "Yes. I revere the wise arrangement by which it takes a man and a woman to make one complete being; and the more I observe and understand refined human nature, the more I think I see the possibilities, and what it was intended that marriage should be. You are a good walker, Mrs. Van Tassel."

"Yes; I am thinking how impatient Mildred and Jack will be with me. I will give you a subject for your analytical mind. Make a record of the broken appointments at the World's Fair and discover the reasons for them. You would have a psychological study of absorbing interest."

"All phases of human nature are interesting."

"Even that where vials of righteous wrath are poured out upon you for delinquency when you know you have n't any defense to offer? You are my defense this time."

"What do you want me to say?"

"Oh, I would n't trust you to say anything. I am morally certain that you would tell the truth."

"That is n't so very damaging, is it?"

"Why, certainly. You would tell them that I stopped to make love to the bronze baby; and if Mildred heard that, hungry as she is by this time, you would soon have to formulate exceptions to your rule that women are all affection outwardly. By the way, what a fortunate experience yours must have been."

Page smiled philosophically, and looked approvingly at his light-footed companion.

They arrived at the café shortly after Mildred had directed her companion's attention to the menu, and the apparition of the unexpected guest entirely diverted from Clover any comment upon her tardiness.

The cordiality of his welcome pleased Page. He could not know the reason for the nervous energy of his cousin's greeting. The four sat for an hour at table and then took their way by boat to the Court of Honor, where they remained in the launch during the playing of the fountains. Clover, sitting next Page, watched his attitude toward this first view of the evening's spectacle with some curiosity.

He caught her amused gaze once as it rested upon him.

"Sumptuous! Delicate! Wonderful!" he said, breaking a long, absorbed silence.

"What?" returned Clover. "But you have n't suggested yet going down beneath the electric fountains to find out the why and the how of it all; and

I am sure you will not rest until you have been on the roof of the Manufactures Building and made friends with the man who manipulates the search light."

"No." Page smiled vaguely and shook his head. "I do not want to go behind the scenes."

"Then the Court of Honor is a wonderful place," said Clover.

"Poetical! Marvelous!" gasped Page.

A gondola decked with soft lanterns stole by. One gondolier swept his oar lazily through the water, the other stood with his hand caught in his bright sash, and poured forth the "*Dammi encor*" from "Faust" with true musical intensity.

Again Clover and Page looked into one another's eyes, but there was no badinage this time in her glance. It was a place of dreams. Showers of golden mist fell beneath the stars. The massive buildings softened away into distant shadowy suggestion. The sculptors' creations shone out thrillingly.

In heavenly beauty stood the Agricultural Hall with its foreground of gleaming water, the pure white of its columns defined against the tempered rose-color of its inner wall, — a vision glowing and pure; as far above its sister palaces in beauty as its use was set apart from theirs; for here were displayed the works of God rather than the imperfect marvels of man's handiwork.

Amid the majestic splendor of the night rolled the passionate appeal of the gondoliers' love-song,

become an impersonal voice now as the boats drifted apart. Little wonder that Page forgot to be abstractly analytical, and that the soft spontaneous sympathy of his companion's eyes exercised enchantment borrowed from the environment. He smiled upon her with a bright tenderness which transfigured his thoughtful face.

For a long time they were silent, but when he gave her his hand as she stepped from the launch, he spoke out of the depths of his enjoyment: —

"That was a never-to-be-forgotten experience for me."

"I think no one ever forgets his first evening in the Court of Honor," returned Clover.

"Well, what are we going to do now?" asked Mildred, as they ascended the steps. "My! How the wind has sprung up from the lake. They will hardly dare to have the fireworks."

"Then let us take a brisk constitutional home," proposed Jack.

"Come, children. Follow your leader," commanded Mildred, turning and addressing Clover and her companion.

"Hurry her by the chocolate houses, Jack," said Clover; "that is, if you can."

"He can't," returned Mildred. "I have my eye on Baker's now."

She insisted that they all stop and partake of the cup, more potent than tea to cheer when the east wind blows, served by the pretty, uniformed girls, who by this time in the evening were in-

clined to be pessimistic and severe, small blame to them. They must easily believe that the human body is largely liquid.

Leaving the little circular temple, the quartette started up the lake shore on the stone walk. The dark waves were tumbling and dashing, tipped with foam in the sudden gale. The battle-ship and large excursion boats were gay with electric lights.

"Oh, Mrs. Van Tassel!" exclaimed Page. "See the search light on the Quadriga." They turned to view the group with its mounted heralds and champing, prancing horses, distinct and unearthly fair in the surrounding blackness.

"Could we walk home backward, do you think?" he asked.

"No," replied Clover. "I can answer with certainty, for I 've tried it more than once."

"I suppose we do in course of time get past the Manufactures Building? What an incomprehensible, colossal thing it is."

"Yes, a good deal more so to me now than it was a month ago."

"Have mercy!" exclaimed Page with a groan.

Mildred and Jack were walking in front of them.

"Isn't this like old times, Mildred?" asked the latter with a relish, clapping his hat on tighter as the sweep of the wind threatened it.

"Just about as unlike as we could imagine. Sorry to disagree with you, Jack."

"Don't mention it. You don't disagree with me, my child. I have enjoyed this first evening with you immensely."

"First evening is pretty good, is n't it?" suggested the girl, and they both laughed. "You did n't use to quarrel for my society," she added.

"I want you to understand that I was n't quarreling with you there, a few hours back, at the Marine Café."

"Oh!"

"No, I was merely making the excusable protest of an old friend, — speaking in a brotherly way, you know."

"Oh, it won't do, Jack." He knew exactly how she was smiling in the darkness. "It is my unalterable rule never to be a sister to any of them. I can't break over it for you."

"Them!" ejaculated her companion. "I don't thank you to class me with Tom, Dick, and Harry, and the rest of these late arrivals. Remember, I was the first-comer into your friendship."

"You *were* a pretty good sort of fellow."

"Yes; you probably can't conceive of what a healing thought it is to me now that I have snubbed you many a time, young lady. I had to. Your attentions were so persistent in those days. Yes, mademoiselle, I had to hold you off, or I should never have had any peace of my life. I remember it well. Perhaps you don't."

"Oh yes, I do, perfectly," sighed Mildred. "Was n't the Flirt the stanchest little dear that

ever spread a sail; and to think that is all over! I don't feel nearly so much elation over going with Mr. Eames on that yacht party to-morrow as I used to in nagging you into consent that I should sail the Flirt."

"Is that the infantry officer?"

"Yes; and he is very nice. I should like you to meet him. If I knew him a little better I would have procured you an invitation. You should remember that virtue is its own reward. If you had not preferred smoking in the hammock to coming into the parlor and making yourself agreeable the other evening when Helen Eames and her mother were calling, they would surely have asked you to join the party. 'If you would be loved, be lovely.' That is what my mother used to tell me." Mildred laughed to herself.

"Then why don't you obey her?" returned Jack curtly.

"I don't want to be loved," returned the spoiled girl. "I'm loved too much already."

After this they marched in silence for a time, their springy steps carrying them by the foreign buildings, Ceylon, France with its green, fountain-sprayed court, Spain, and Germany. It was not until they turned beside Iowa's pavilion and left behind them the waves dashing on the sea-wall that Mildred spoke again.

"It gives me the blues, Jack, every time I see our boathouse stranded high and dry behind that nightmare of a Spectatorium."

"I don't see how you can call anything dry that is as full of beer as that is."

"Oh," exclaimed the girl indignantly, "what a fall from its old estate! To think of our play-house being turned into a saloon! Do you remember the dance it was christened with? I was allowed to go, and you made me perfectly happy by waltzing with me once."

"Humph!" returned the other. "And now it is a great question whether you would make me perfectly happy by waltzing with me once."

"Oh, Jack," Mildred laughed out now, "don't be cross. Don't grudge a girl her 'little brief authority.' My observation of life has taught me that her queenship is brief enough. She blossoms out of awkward childhood into an attractive womanhood, and then after a little space yields up her sweet liberty to some lord of creation whom she has to pacify and wait on ever afterward. Moral: Let her keep her authority as long as possible."

"You seem to have been rather unfortunate in your married masculine acquaintance," returned Van Tassel drily.

A sudden thought sent the color flying to Mildred's face, and her customary complacent poise was shaken.

"There was one exception," she said, so timidly and meekly that her companion was struck by the change; but she had not the courage to be more specific, and there was no need. Jack understood her.

When the four reached home they found Miss Berry in the sitting-room reading by the light of a lamp.

Blitzen was sitting on a rug, and did not, as usual, run to meet them. On a chair reposed a bird-cage with some white stuff in it.

"What is this, Aunt Love?" asked Clover. "Have you some new pets?"

"I 've got one," returned Miss Berry, smiling placidly. "I 'll give you all three guesses. It 's a World's Fair souvenir."

"Tell us, Blitzen," said Mildred, kneeling on the rug beside the small dog and shaking his tousled head; but Blitzen, as soon as he could free himself, withdrew in unwonted dignity. Evidently there was that within him to-night which could not brook flippancy.

"A live souvenir?" asked Clover, perplexed.

"Mr. Gorham can guess," remarked Miss Lovina, glancing again down the columns of her newspaper, and shaking in a comfortable silent laugh.

"I?" said Page; then, after a moment's cogitation, "You surely did n't bring home one of those chickens?"

"I did. In that cage, my dears, there is an electric chicken." Miss Berry looked over her spectacles impressively. "The same power that runs the inter-internal railroad and shines in the rainbow fountains, don't disdain to hatch a chicken. If you doubt it, there 's the chicken."

She gestured toward the bird-cage.

"I brought it home in a box; and I said to myself that most everybody had an old cage, so I went up garret, and there I found that one. On Blitzen's account I thought best to use a cage to-night." Her gaze descended on the terrier, whose head descended beneath it.

"Blitzen," asked Jack with deliberate, stern solemnity, "what do you think of the chicken?"

Blitzen rose with a crushed air, and slowly, as one who would not attract attention, crept across the room and retired under a remote sofa.

A shout of laughter followed his unostentatious disappearance.

"We've had some words," explained Aunt Love. "He barked cruel at the poor little thing when he first saw me with it."

"Have it out, have the chicken out," said Mildred; and Miss Berry, yielding to the general urgency, produced her prize from the depths of the cotton wool. It began to struggle and peep vigorously as soon as its beady eyes saw the light, and there came a muffled howl from under the sofa.

"What are you going to name it?" asked Clover.

"I don't know what name would be good enough for such a smart critter."

"Why, Electra, of course," remarked Jack. "Nothing less for such a star among chickens."

"Sounds well and suitable," observed Miss

Berry placidly, "whether it means anything or not."

"I wonder if it has any unusual springs," said Mildred. "If I should touch the button do you suppose it would give us a rest?" She advanced a finger toward one of the bright eyes, but Miss Berry removed her squeaking prize from harm, and tucked it away again in the cotton from which it struggled several times before finally settling down with a diminuendo of peeps.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CLOVER'S DIPLOMACY.

Mr. and Mrs. Page arrived duly, even a little earlier than they had at first anticipated. Jack met them at the station and drove with them to their destination.

"You see it was simply impossible, Mrs. Van Tassel, for my wife to curb her impatience after Gorham began to write home," said Mr. Page to his hostess in explanation of their change of plan. "Gorham does n't very often gush, as perhaps you know."

"And I assure you that Mr. Page was not difficult to persuade," added Hilda. "Your last kind letter determined us. And I am really in Chicago!" she went on, looking about her. "Jack, congratulate me!"

"I do, sincerely. I think you, Hilda, will appreciate your advantages."

Mr. Page gave his contagious, quiet chuckle. "That is the way he goes on," he said, turning to Mildred. "Jack is very severe on me always. I am going to show you, Miss Bryant, several lists of adjectives, carefully prepared, very carefully and thoughtfully, one for every day in the week, that I am intending to use on the World's Fair to mollify my cousin."

"You might have trusted safely to the inspiration of the moment," returned Mildred gayly.

"Oh, you don't know Jack. One single false move, one expletive out of place, and it would be all over with me."

"Poor Robert, I feel for you," remarked Van Tassel.

"Why, that is mysterious," replied his cousin. "Anybody who compassionates me just now does n't understand economizing his emotions." The speaker sank back in his roomy wicker chair and took a glass of lemonade from a salver which Miss Berry was passing to the company. The crushed ice jingled pleasantly against the crystal, and the couple of straws that emerged from each glass were alluring to a stout and thirsty man. "Aunt Love, it is very pleasant to see you here," he added. "We shall have to renew our old acquaintance. We had no time in Boston."

"That 's so, Mr. Page. I guess I can jog your memory about a good many things."

When later the husband and wife were shown to their own room and the door was closed, Robert looked at Hilda with large eyes. "Whew!" he said softly. "Uncle Richard was all right. What pretty women!"

"I told you so. I told you that Mildred was a perfect Juno, and that you were very unfortunate to be out of town when she spent that week with me at the beach. As for Mrs. Van Tassel" —

"Why, she 's an angel, — she 's an angel! I knew it from her letter. I felt it in my bones."

"As if you knew anything about your bones, you dear old cushion. Stop praising those girls, — calling one a goddess and one an angel. Come and apostrophize the lake. Is n't it beautiful?"

"It was you who called Miss Bryant a goddess, remember. Yes, this is every bit as good as the ocean, for all I see," walking to the window and putting an arm around his wife's waist. "We are in great luck, Hilda," continued Page, glancing about their spacious room. "This is n't much like the discomforts we read about in connection with World's Fair visiting. I don't wonder," he added after a pause, "that Jack was cut up by being at cross purposes with those girls."

"H'm. There is one exhibit I have come out here to see that is n't inside the White City," returned Hilda. "I 've come to discover which one of them Jack is in love with."

"Both, of course. How can he help it?" replied her husband promptly.

Gorham took it upon himself to launch his brother and sister on their Fair pilgrimage that very evening.

When they came home again, hours later, Clover and Jack were sitting alone in the parlor and rose to meet them as they entered the room. Their tired, excited faces were a study.

Hilda dropped into a chair. "Well," she exclaimed, "I never expected to go to heaven till I died; but I 've been there."

"Jack," added Robert meekly, "get in your

fine work now. I 've nothing to say, absolutely nothing. I 've dropped my jaw so often since six o'clock that it is n't in working order, any way."

"Say no more," returned Van Tassel, waving his hand grandiloquently. "We Chicagoans are nothing if not magnanimous."

"I thought I knew what I was going to see, that is the queer part of it," said Page, looking perplexed; "but it seems I did n't know anything at all about it. I feel there is an unlimited feast in store for me, Mrs. Van Tassel."

Clover smiled at his enthusiastic tone. "You are in the first-day frame of mind, I see."

"What is that?"

"Oh, eagerness and hopefulness."

"And what is the second?"

"Despair; yes, overwhelming, stony despair."

"What is the third? Suicidal tendency?"

"No indeed. Resignation. At first one expects and determines to see everything; soon finds that to be so impossible that he yields to his bewilderment, and at last accepts the inevitable and sets himself to see what he can, and be rapturously content therewith."

"Thank you, thank you! Forewarned, forearmed. Perhaps we may even skip the second stage."

A few days later, Clover, her guests having scattered on various quests, went to the noon orchestral concert in Festival Hall. This wonderfully

generous free exhibit attracted a large audience, many of whom embraced it as an opportunity to rest from the fatigues of sight-seeing, while many others, coming perhaps from the country where "hearing a band" was a rare privilege, were drawn thither by the hope of attractive music.

Possibly one half the number came intelligently to the feast, and greeted the conductor when he entered upon the stage. Clover joined in the applause as Theodore Thomas passed before his players with that quiet, characteristic grace, which has power to thrill with anticipation a greater number of America's music-lovers than the movement of any other man.

It interested her as it had many a time before, this summer, to note the effect upon certain of the audience of the number with which the programme opened. She saw pleased hopefulness give way to apathy in many faces, as strange harmonies and dissonances fell upon uncultivated ears. She noticed one patient-faced countryman who waited through two numbers, evidently discovering nothing but a wilderness of sound. He then examined his programme, and not finding "After the Ball" on it, arose and departed from the hall more in sorrow than anger.

Blessings on the man, by the way, who introduced the noiseless paper on which those programmes were printed. There were two girls sitting next to Clover, chewing gum while they listened for some melody they could recognize, and Clover congrat-

ulated herself that all the foldings and drummings of their programmes were inaudible; but alas, as soon as the maidens discovered that the music they were hearing was unworthy the name, they cheerfully set about doing the next best thing, which was to prepare for the afternoon's campaign. This was a free concert anyway, so no matter if it was n't worth much. They would not leave at once, because this was a better place to rest than they would be likely to find soon again; so they unfolded their maps of the grounds, not printed on absorbent paper, far from it, and proceeded to discuss their plans.

Clover caught sight of Jack standing across the hall. He discovered her at the same moment. His concentrated look flashed into a smile as they exchanged nods.

At the close of the number he came around to where Clover sat in the front row of the circle, and leaned his arm on the railing in front of her.

"How handsome Jack can look, when he is happy and interested," she thought, and instantly became aware that her neighbors had ceased their planning, and were nudging each other in silent absorption.

"Was n't that great!" he exclaimed. "Are you going over to the Music Hall this afternoon?"

"Indeed I am. They are going to play the Tschaikowsky Symphony."

"That settles it. Suppose we go up in the

wheel after lunch, and then go over to the concert together."

"All right. I 'd like to. Why, there is Mildred on the left, down there near the front. I did n't know she was coming."

"Nor I. Shall I go and speak to her?"

In a minute Jack was back, just as the music began again. The girls who had constituted the thorn in Clover's side during the first half of the programme had left their seats as soon as he moved away, so he came in and took the place beside Clover.

"Mildred says she will go with us," he whispered.

When the Intermezzo was finished, Clover spoke.

"Did you ask Mildred to join us?" she asked.

"No, she proposed it," returned Jack, and there was a pleasure in his eyes which did not escape his companion.

"You mentioned last night in our talk that you had n't seen much of Mildred since you came; that she was too much of a belle for your comfort."

"Yes. It is simply surprising to find her here alone."

Clover's eyes twinkled. She had mentioned to her sister, this morning, that she meant to meet Jack at the noon concert.

"Well, you leave her to me. No matter what I say, don't contradict me. Promise?"

"What 's up?" asked Van Tassel doubtfully.

"Oh, Mildred's conceit and a few other things

that ought to come down. I want you to myself a part of the time, Jack."

Her companion met her laughing glance.

"I am yours to command, Clover, always."

"Don't forget, then," she answered.

When the concert was over, Mildred came slowly up the aisle, superb as usual in her consciously unconscious carriage.

"Well," she said to her sister as they met, "where are we to lunch?"

"Are you going to lunch with us?" asked Clover in well-affected surprise.

"Of course I am," returned the younger with a half-pouting smile flung at Jack; "and I am going in the Ferris Wheel with you too. I haven't been up in it yet."

"Why, I don't see how you possibly can, Mildred," said Clover coolly. "I heard you promise Mr. and Mrs. Page to meet them in the Art Gallery at two o'clock, and show Mrs. Page some of our favorite pictures."

Mildred expected some protest from Jack, and was disconcerted that none came. "I only told them that if I was at the south entrance at two o'clock I would act as their cicerone," she answered.

"Well, my dear, having said so much," suggested Clover gravely, "I think the least you can do is to be there, considering that they are our guests."

Still Jack did not interfere. Mildred could not

forbear hurling one glance at him from beneath her eyelashes, but it might have been a gaze. Van Tassel was absently viewing the dispersing audience.

Her eyes and cheeks burned as they had on the night he refused to accompany her to witness the fireworks, but as on that occasion she carried the matter with a high hand.

"Very well, then you have lost my company at lunch, too. You and Jack would be sure to make me late, dawdling at table. *Au revoir*," and as they nodded to her, she swept away.

Clover looked at her companion and tried to repress the mirthful laugh that bubbled over her lips.

"Jack, you would n't be human if you had n't enjoyed that."

"Then I must be inhuman," he responded rather ruefully, "for I give you my word I 'm scared almost to death."

"Don't you worry, *mon ami;* I know Mildred to the depths of her noble, generous, overbearing, over-indulged soul."

"I don't suppose you realize, Clover," Van Tassel spoke low and jerkily, "but I care very much; absurdly much, you might think, considering the shortness of the time."

Clover looked into his flushed face, and the merriment in her sweet eyes was quenched.

"Dear Jack," she said, laying her hand lightly on his arm, "whatever you wish, I wish. Trust

me. No harm has been done. Do you want my advice, — the advice of one who knows? "

"Yes, I do."

"Then don't let Mildred suspect what you have told me. The round world is just a rattle to her now. You are one of the bells on it that jingle for her amusement when she moves you. There are Katherines in existence still, and Petruchios are wholesome teachers for them."

"Imagine me cracking a horsewhip at Mildred! "

"Out, please! " roared a Columbian Guard, exasperated by the sight of these two loiterers, after the remainder of the audience had drifted away. "As if there was n't any other place on the grounds to spoon but just this," he muttered.

Mildred, to her credit be it said, devoted her afternoon to Mrs. Page with as cheerful courtesy as though she bore no grudge in her mind against the world. Mr. Page left them together and went off somewhere under his brother's guidance. It was nearly dinner-time when he drove up to the house in a Beach wagon, and found Mildred swinging idly in a hammock on the piazza.

"Your wife is taking a nap," she announced, as he came up the steps.

"Fortunate woman! " he responded, sinking wearily upon a wicker divan. "The only interest I 've had for hours in any exhibit was as to whether there was a chair in it; but Gorham is a terrible fellow. Merciless. Each building being

one thousand miles from every other building makes it hard lines. I threatened more than once to trip over one of those chains that say 'Keep off the grass,' and refuse to get up again."

"You and your brother should have taken one of those double chairs."

"Oh, there would n't have been any room for Gorham," and the jolly man laughed. "I suppose you have done the Plaisance."

"Partly, yes."

"Gorham and I went into the Dahomey village, this afternoon. Some of those savages were unpleasantly personal. Good afternoon, Aunt Love," as the housekeeper appeared on the veranda. "I was just telling Miss Mildred how those children of nature in the Dahomey village injured my finer feelings to-day. One of them came for me with a big carving knife, yelling 'Big man, fat man,' and going through the pantomime of taking a slice off my sacred person."

"Dirty critters!" remarked Miss Berry sententiously.

"Is n't it a funny paradox to see an incandescent light over the door of each hut?" went on Page. "There was one big fellow squatted down in the sun, off by himself, playing on a rough sort of a harp, and singing monotonously something that sounded like 'Come away, come away, Chicago.' I tried to write down the pitches he sang, and that amused him immensely. His ivories would have made a perfect dentist's sign.

I gave him a dime or so to repeat the performance a sufficient number of times, and he was delighted, and kept saying 'Chicago beer.'"

"Yes," returned Miss Berry bitterly. "They have to come to a Christian land for that."

"Wait till you see the South Sea Islanders," said Mildred.

"We did. Fine, aren't they? There is an exhibition of drill and muscle worth seeing."

"And that *café-au-lait* skin!" exclaimed Mildred. "I am entirely spoiled for white beauties."

"Let 'em wear somethin' more 'n a straw wreath and a piece o' calico then," remarked Miss Berry.

"But Aunt Love," suggested Page, "you must remember how clothing that brown skin is. I am sure you must admit it is an improving sight to see one of those heavy-eyed beauties sit cross-legged, and absently scratch one great toe while she sings."

"What are you all laughing about?" asked Hilda, coming out upon the piazza in the freshness of a light organdie gown.

"Your husband has been to the Midway," returned Miss Berry. "Don't be surprised at anything he may say or do; and I don't believe we'd better wait for Mr. and Mrs. Van Tassel any longer, for dinner was ready when I came out here."

"I don't understand Clover's staying so," remarked Mildred, leaving the hammock and trying not to speak severely.

"I go, I fly, to make myself presentable," said Page, slowly dragging himself up from his comfortable resting-place.

After dinner Mildred made an opportunity to address the housekeeper privately. "For pity's sake, Aunt Love, when you are going to speak of Jack and Clover as you did this evening, don't say Mr. and Mrs. Van Tassel."

"Why not?" asked Miss Lovina with exasperating unconsciousness.

"Why, it sounds so — so — absurdly married."

Miss Berry smiled. "What shall I say then?"

"Mrs. and Mr. Van Tassel, of course," replied Mildred, making an effort to speak with a suavity she did not feel.

"Well, if that ain't a new idea. Mrs. and Mr.! Do tell!" said Miss Berry good-naturedly. "Oh, I 'll learn a deal of etiquette to take back to Pearfield. It 's enough to do a body good to see Mr. Jack and your sister so much to each other, ain't it? Seems if they have lots o' pleasure together now; just as it should be."

"I don't know that they are together so very much," returned Mildred coolly.

"That 's 'cause you 're off so much o' the time. Why, they 're just the best friends that ever was; and Mrs. Van Tassel, she 's gone back before my eyes from a grave woman full o' care to a merry girl just as free as a bird. It does me good, Miss Mildred. It does me so much good, I 'm 'most afraid I shall grow fat on it."

Mildred's bright eyes looked thoughtful for a second, as though she were digesting the housekeeper's words. "There is Blitzen, barking," she exclaimed, and both hastened to see whether Electra's nervous system was receiving some fresh shock.

Gorham Page strayed over from the hotel, as was his habit after dinner, and found the family disposed in various comfortable chairs and hammocks about the piazza.

The autocratic Miss Bryant was feeling a trifle sore, although she did not dream of acknowledging to herself that it was because Clover and Jack still remained away, and in the present sensitive state of her self-love it was a new affront that Gorham did not at once seek her side, but after bowing to her, settled down beside Mrs. Page, who closed the book she was reading upon her finger as a marker.

"Yes indeed, the afternoon was delightful," she said, in answer to his question. "Mildred and I had a charming time among the pictures. You nearly committed fratricide. Do you see poor Robert fast asleep over there?"

"This will do him a world of good. Train down his flesh, and strengthen his muscle; though the poor old chap did say, before we decided to come home, that he had walked so long his feet splayed out like the camels' every time he set them down." Page laughed reminiscently.

"Camels? Did you go into Cairo Street?"

"No, to the Bedouin village; the Wild East show."

"Very well. You have just saved your lives. I understand that Cairo Street is one of the plums of the Plaisance, and if Robert had gone without me, I should have been highly offended."

"Yes, he is well trained. I wonder if my wife will find me as thoughtful. I am afraid not."

Hilda laughed at the sincere meekness of his tone. "No, I 'm sure she won't, for the simple reason that you will never have one."

"I should be sorry to think that."

"Then why don't you do as nine out of every ten men in your place would do?"

"You mean fall in love? You know, Hilda, how often I 've done that."

Mrs. Page laughed again at the gently remonstrant tone. "Your sort of falling in love is n't worth two straws," she declared scoffingly. "Don't take that into consideration at all. The next woman you meet who satisfies you intellectually, propose to her. If she accepts you, marry her. I don't believe you would make her very unhappy. You would n't if you were as kind a husband as you are a brother."

"Thank you. You might give me a written recommendation. See how handsome Miss Bryant's face looks against that golden pillow."

"Yes; it is a proof of your hard heart that you withstand her."

"I don't withstand her. You have no idea how

much I enjoyed an afternoon I had with her at the Fair last week; but Jack was remarkably short with me that evening, and I fancied I had trespassed on his preserves."

"Not a bit of it. He must be a dog in the manger."

"Why, I'm very sure he is hard hit in that direction."

"Oh, where are a man's eyes, I wonder! I haven't been here very long, but long enough to discover the truth."

"I suppose you want me to ask you what truth?"

"No, I don't, my dear." Mrs. Page reopened her book.

"You are not hinting at — at — Mrs. Van Tassel?" Gorham spoke in a hushed tone.

"Just observe for yourself," said Hilda sententiously.

"You ought not to have such a thought."

Mrs. Page looked up, wondering at this severity. "Why, if you please? You surely haven't an idea that that young creature is going to sacrifice the rest of her life to a memory of duty done?"

"But Hilda, that is repugnant!" Page rose suddenly, and his sister's gaze followed him as he moved away. It was very unusual for him to show so much feeling. "Wouldn't it be a strange, strange thing if after waiting all these years Gorham should love at last and love hopelessly?" She banished the query with a sigh. Sober second thought assured her that her brother had not meant

more than he said. The idea that Jack might wish to marry his father's widow was distasteful to him, and that was all.

Page approached Mildred, little realizing how indefensible she considered it that he had not done so some minutes previous. She was too glad of his presence, however, to punish him. It would never do for Jack to come home and suppose that she had not been holding court.

"What beautiful evenings you have in Chicago," he began. "May I take this chair?" drawing one near the hammock in which she was sitting against a nest of pillows, her foot touching the floor gently as she rocked.

"Yes, I never tire of seeing the moonlight on the water as it is shining to-night. When I was a little girl it was a great treat to me to be allowed to spend a summer evening on this piazza, and I enjoy it scarcely less now."

"You enjoy it very seldom, I observe."

"Yes, of course there are lots of engagements this summer, and a quiet evening at home like this seems very welcome occasionally. One likes too, sometimes, to renew acquaintance with the moon. After living among rosy, violet, pale green, and white search lights, and all sorts of spectacular electrical effects so much, one comes back to moonlight on the water as to an old friend."

The girl clasped her hands above her head upon the down pillow, and allowed Page to look at her, which he was not slow to do.

"I miss your sister and Jack, this evening. Where are they?"

"Columbus knows! Since the authorities have been Barnumizing the Fair, as they call it, one is led on to stay, and stay, and stay, to see this race or that dance or the other illumination. I left them after the noon concert."

"You were there, then. Of course you are fond of music."

"I enjoy it very much, although Clover says I don't. She and Jack are cranks about it. I am not."

"They have one strong predilection in common, then."

Mildred did not reply; and Page continued: "The effect of music upon a person who is in sympathy with it is an interesting study. Those involuntary chills that pass over one under the moving influence of good music are rather annoying to me. I do not wish to be moved uncontrollably by anything. I wish to decide just how deeply to feel on any subject. Do you know what I mean?"

"Yes, exactly." The decision of the girl's reply rather surprised her companion. She let him look deep into her luminous eyes set in the moonlight fairness of her face. "And further than agreeing with you in the desirability of the principle," she added, "I carry the theory into practice."

"Do you mean to say that you are always able to let your head decide what your heart shall feel?"

"Invariably."

"But that is no common characteristic in a woman. With women the heart speaks first usually."

"Not in the case of the well-balanced woman."

"Then perhaps you can tell me," said Page, much surprised and interested, "perhaps you will be good enough to tell me what your ideas are concerning love. There, too, do you think it possible for the head to speak first?"

Mildred let a repressed laugh burst its bounds. "Do you mean, do I think it possible to fall in love head first?"

"Forgive me if I ask too much; but it seems to me very helpful to compare notes with one whose aims and desires are similar to your own."

"Oh, I don't mind telling you, Mr. Page," said the girl, sobering. "My ideas on the subject are clearly formulated, and I know of no reason why I should not impart them to one who will be appreciative. I believe a woman can decide what characteristics would be sympathetic with hers, and when she is sufficiently acquainted with a man to discover if he is possessed of those qualities, she can give rein to her heart, and love him" — the speaker suddenly extended her white hands before her — "love him with all her soul!"

The sudden thrill in her movement and in her low contralto voice electrified her listener by its unexpectedness.

"But can one always love where the head dictates?" he asked; "that is the question."

"Undoubtedly; for when one finds the combination she seeks, she will discover that she has loved it already. I will tell you, Mr. Page, you tempt my confidence because you captivate my judgment. I will describe to you the man I await. He must be good to look upon, for I value beauty of form; but he must be cool and steady of brain, must love to think, to analyze, to look upon life not as a plaything but as something the laws of which must be studied and explored continually. Incidents which appear trifling to others, to him will suggest a thousand questions. He must in short be a student of human nature whose researches I may, by-and-by, as I grow wiser, assist. Oh, proud, happy destiny!" She paused as though overcome, and grasping the sides of the hammock looked with a quick turn of her head toward the moonlight.

Page regarded her in silence, then leaned toward her in his earnestness. "A man like that is not found every day, Miss Bryant; but I congratulate you on your high standard; for the being you describe has surely a great heart to throb for humanity as well as the head to study it, and your affections will not be starved, I am sure of that."

Mildred grasped the hammock closer and caught her lip between her teeth. Page's unconsciousness had turned the tables, and she had sufficient sense of humor, in spite of her vanity, to make it difficult not to smile as he walked unseeing around her net, and it fell, enveloping her own saucy head.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE FERRIS WHEEL.

It was half past nine when the wagonette bringing Clover and Jack stopped before the house. They were received with a chorus of questions, in which Mildred was too clever not to join. She was glad that Van Tassel must see Gorham seated near her, apart from the others, confidentially discoursing in the moonlight, even though Jack did not seem to observe it. He seated himself on the step near Mrs. Page, and leaned against a railing.

"We have had a fine time!" he exclaimed with what Mildred's practiced ear recognized as unmistakable sincerity.

"Oh, the German village by moonlight, Milly!" added Clover, taking a place near her sister. "You really ought to see it."

"We ought to have been there, Mr. Page," said Mildred regretfully.

"I doubt if I could have had a pleasanter evening anywhere," he returned; and if Miss Bryant had had power to decorate him she would have done so on the spot for that timely speech. She trusted Jack had heard it.

"We sat there at table, you know," went on

the latter, "and saw the moon come up over those quaint old gables. Oh, it was fine. I declare, we did n't know where we were. Did we, Clover?"

"I thought you were quite certain by the alleged German you entertained me with."

"Alleged German! Well, if this is n't sad! There I wasted Heine's poems by the yard on you. Ungrateful girl! You will never know all the sweet things that were said to you to-night."

"I know you drank a lot of beer and smoked too many cigars."

"Of course, being in Rome I complimented the inhabitants by imitation."

"Mr. Jack," spoke Miss Berry reproachfully, "I remember well that you said once you only smoked on holidays and birthdays."

"Certainly, Aunt Love, that is my rule still. I never break it."

"Whose birthday is this?" demanded Miss Berry, somewhat taken back.

"How should I know? Somebody's, surely." Jack looked up innocently. "I never show favoritism."

"Oh!" groaned Gorham, rising. "I can't stay here. Discipline him, Aunt Love. I am going to my uncontaminated roof-tree."

"Let us all take Gorham home," suggested Jack, also rising. "I 'm afraid to be left here with Aunt Love's righteous wrath. Come, all of you. Nobody is too tired to walk to that music."

For the band on the hotel piazza was playing

the Washington Post March, which by midsummer was running neck and neck with "After the Ball."

"Come, Robert," said Hilda, shaking the somnolent form in the hammock.

"Hey? What? Don't disturb me. I can die here as well as anywhere. What! Walk home with Gorham? Do you take me for an idiot? Music and moonlight!" with deep scorn. "Oh, go to! Woman, stand aside, or I shall do you an injury. Don't tempt a desperate man."

"Dear Robert does n't seem to care to come with us," laughed Mildred *sotto voce* to Jack. She was determined that none other than he should walk by her side to the hotel, and of course she had her way.

An hour later she came into Clover's bedroom, brushing her long hair. Her white wrapper fell open at the neck, disclosing her handsome throat, and she looked particularly beautiful to her partial sister.

"Where else did you and Jack go to-night beside the German village?" she asked.

"Nowhere."

"You took supper there and stayed all the evening?"

"Yes. We really could n't tear ourselves away. It was like being in some romantic old story."

Mildred smiled and hummed her favorite bit from Iolanthe.

"No indeed," answered Clover. "I am not his mother. He does n't pretend that I am, and he

does n't wish me to be: so your little song does n't fit the case at all."

She did not look at her sister, but went on with her effort to braid her rebellious hair. Mildred ceased humming.

"I wish my hair was curly," she said at last.

"We all have our gifts," replied Clover. Mildred thought her tone sounded unusually complacent. It was a novel experience to feel aught but compassion, or tenderness, or reverent admiration for Clover, but now she suddenly found herself regarding her for the first time as another girl like herself, and observing her attractions with new eyes.

"What a pretty foot you have, Clover," she said, looking at her sister's slippered feet.

"Not a bit better shaped than yours, my dear. Let us have a select little mutual admiration society."

"But mine are large," returned Mildred, sitting down and thrusting forth her slippers for inspection.

"So are you," suggested Clover.

"But is n't it strange that people never consider that, in speaking of a woman's foot? She must have small feet irrespective of her size, or else they had better never be seen or mentioned. In old novels a man sometimes keeps his beloved's slipper under a glass case. What a formidable piece of furniture my lover will have when he gets a glass case for mine."

"Foolish child! You are proportioned just right."

"Perhaps; but what I say is that the consensus of opinion decides that I ought not to be. Shoe men fall in with that idea. Dainty shoes are small shoes. I tell you fame and wealth awaits the shoe-dealer who becomes inspired with the idea that large women want pretty shoes too."

"You seem to have made Mr. Page have a delightful evening," remarked Clover.

"Yes; he didn't ask for one of my slippers, though. Fancy sterling cousin Page ordering a glass case!"

Clover smiled in answer to Mildred's laugh.

"What did you talk about?"

"Oh, weights and measures, as usual. I was n't in the mood to be good, and I tried conscientiously to make a fool of our friend."

"Mildred!"

"No harm done; I did n't succeed. He made one of me instead. This has been what you might term an off day for your little sister."

"What do you mean? How did he make a fool of you?" Clover turned with so much curiosity in her gaze that Mildred rose quickly.

"I 'll never tell you, — or hardly ever. Perhaps when we are both married."

Clover turned back to the glass, and Mildred was a little dismayed. The words had slipped out unthinkingly. Until this evening she had agreed in her sister's acceptance of the fact that her life could not be like that of other girls.

"Good-night," she said, standing back of Clover and meeting her eyes in the mirror.

"Good-night," returned the other.

Mildred kissed her cheek. "Do you like me?" she asked softly.

"Pretty well," Mrs. Van Tassel smiled. "Lots better than you deserve."

The younger sister went to her room satisfied. Arrogant and autocratic she might be to her slaves, but Clover's approval was the necessary sunshine in which her life blossomed.

Van Tassel had to put a guard upon his lips in the next days. He was trying to follow Clover's advice not to ask Mildred again to go to the Fair with him. It made the case harder, inasmuch as he could not help feeling that now she expected it. He noticed that she did not make outside engagements as much as before; but was oftener at home, either sitting about the piazzas in gowns which Jack thought the most becoming that ever girl wore, or else romping with Blitzen and paying exasperating attention to Electra, who was fast developing into the most self-assured and exacting chicken of the Columbian year.

The following sort of scene was sometimes endured in anguish by the lover who was disciplining his lady to order.

Jack was one morning reading the newspaper on the piazza, Mildred sitting in the hammock, and Clover and Hilda training the morning-glories.

"Why don't I go to the Fair?" Mildred said, addressing the lake, resplendent with miles of diamonds.

Jack's hand closed on his paper in his longing to accept the challenge; not being at all certain that he would not receive a negative if he did, but still yearning to try his luck.

"Is it a conundrum?" asked Clover. "I can give a guess, if you like."

"Thank you; you're always so kind, dear. Come, and go up in the Ferris Wheel with me, Clover. If you will, that will decide me."

"I could n't, really. I 'm glad I have been. One must go, of course; but twice, no, I could n't." Clover passed near Jack, who threw an imploring glance at her behind his paper. "I can feel my hair whitening!" he murmured; but Mrs. Van Tassel frowned warningly upon him.

"What a pity you did n't say something about it before Robert went," said Hilda. "I think he means to go in the wheel to-day, as that is one of the things I can't bring my mind to do."

"But you will have a hundred chances, Milly dear. Some of our friends are always going," added Clover comfortingly.

"Oh, don't trouble yourself," remarked Mildred with nonchalance. "I assure you I can go when I like," and she rose and sauntered into the house, followed by Hilda.

Clover laughed softly into the pink lips of a morning glory which she held in her hand.

"This may be very good fun for you," said Van Tassel, his unread paper dropped, "but let me tell you it is making an old man of me."

"Do your own way then, Jack, and live to repent of it."

"But I don't want to have to repent."

"Then behave as though you had some backbone. Remember Petruchio."

"Oh, that will do to say! Petruchio was married."

"All right. I wash my hands of you."

"No, no, don't, Clover."

Clover took pity on the clouded face.

"I 'll give you a little bit of comfort, Jack," she said, gazing down at him knowingly.

"Angel!"

"Oh, it is only a wee, wee bit; but Mildred is uncomfortable."

"I should think that was wee," returned Van Tassel, his face falling.

"I don't know. It is the first time any man ever affected her that much."

"A very poor recommendation, I should think," remarked Van Tassel.

"Oh, Jack," Clover laughed, "I can see you would have had an awful time without me."

"I am having an awful time with you, Clover."

"Then gang your ain gait any time" —

"And may God have mercy on my soul, I suppose you mean," added Jack ruefully.

It was his habit to have flowers sent to the

house almost daily, and Clover often wore his roses; Mildred never. Van Tassel asked her once if she never wore flowers, and she answered indifferently that she often did.

"I have never happened to see you with any on," he said.

"Indeed?" she returned with one of her characteristic smiles. "Then that must be because you never sent me any. Now don't look like that, Jack. If you should send me flowers, now, do you know what I should do with them?"

"Pitch them out the window, probably."

"No; for that would disfigure the lawn, and Clover is very particular about the lawn. I should present them to Aunt Love."

So Jack only gave one impotent look into her starry eyes, and continued to send his lavish floral gifts impersonally to the house.

But one morning Mildred came down with some sprays of heliotrope fastened in her dress. Van Tassel was delighted; but acting with blind faith in Clover, he did not appear to notice the concession. He had won several words of commendation from his mentor for the manner in which of late he had been playing his rôle. He had even called upon Mildred's friend, Miss Eames, in response to the latter's invitation, and had gone with her one day to the Art Gallery, and after coming home praised her discriminating and intelligent taste. It seemed to him an eternity since he had asked Mildred to go anywhere with him.

On this morning she waited for some remark upon her decoration, but none came. Matters had become serious if such condescension was not going to be gratefully received. The family usually sauntered out upon the piazza after breakfast, and Van Tassel took his paper with him to-day as usual. He was alive in every nerve to the fact that Mildred had on a street dress, which meant the Fair. He wondered profoundly, as he always did, what her plans were and whom she was going with, but he gazed unseeingly into his paper, and was dumb.

All of a sudden, a sort of electric shock seemed to pervade the air about him. Mildred was standing at his side.

"Did you notice how perfect this heliotrope is?" she asked, looking down, not at him, but at the blossoms on the lapel of her jacket.

"It is pretty," he answered, wondering how soon his evil star would lure him on to say the wrong thing.

His apparently indifferent manner piqued her still further. "If you feel very good, and are sure you are going to be good all day, I will give you a piece," she said, separating one spray from its fellows.

Van Tassel sprang to his feet, and in a second Mildred's fingers were upon his coat.

"The round world is just a rattle to her, and you are one of the bells on it that jingle when she moves you."

Clover's words were sounding warningly in his

ears. He could not help it. He only prayed to jingle in tune, for moved he was to the depths of his being.

"You like heliotrope very much?" he asked, not daring to look below her cool, fair forehead.

"Yes. Sometimes, I think, best of all; but," with a sigh, "it goes quickly." And she dropped her hands and moved back.

"Like all the happiest moments of life," said Jack, and something leaped from his brown eyes that actually surprised Mildred, coming out of the long train of indifferent days.

"Oh, if Jack is like that," she thought, and a new respect grew in her for the man who ruled himself, and refused to submit to her caprice.

"It is a clear day, Mildred. Let us go up in the Wheel," he said. "Have you made the trip yet?"

"No, but I have a new idea about it. I 'm sure it will make me dizzy. It did Clover; and I think I shall be afraid, too."

"Don't give up going. I 'm sure you will not be afraid. It is an absolutely steady, safe motion, and the changing view is unique."

"No, indeed; I would n't give up going, only I think I would rather go alone. I don't want any one to behold my weakness."

"Oh, very well." Van Tassel made a gesture of indifferent assent, sat down, and returned to his paper. The little incident of the heliotrope had done more to convince him of Clover's wisdom

than all her sage words. Its perfume stole up to him as he sat reading the same line over twelve times.

Mildred moved away, outwardly calm, inwardly vexed with Jack for his ready acquiescence.

She went into the house and met Clover. "Going to the Fair?" asked the latter.

"Yes, I think so."

"Wait half an hour or so, and go with us."

"I don't believe you will take my way, for I am going in the Wheel."

"With Jack?"

"No, alone."

"Mr. Page wants to go again. Let me ask him. He is upstairs writing a letter."

"Don't speak to him for anything."

"But I don't want you to go to the Midway alone, Milly. Hilda and both Mr. Pages and I are going to the Anthropological Building together. Do put off the Wheel, and come with us."

"No, I thank you. Our friend Gorham will be in his element, getting your mental and physical strength tested up there in the gallery. I would n't be in that revel for anything," and Mildred ran upstairs.

Clover passed out upon the piazza.

"Is Mildred going to the Fair?" asked Van Tassel, looking up quickly.

"Yes. I do wish for once, Jack, you had asked to go with her, for she is bound for the Ferris Wheel."

"I did."

"And she refused?" exclaimed Clover in surprise and exasperation. "Was there ever such an incomprehensible"—

"But she gave me this." Van Tassel exhibited his flower.

Clover looked interested. "Well, then, we are getting on," she said, much pleased. "Go on being an icicle, Jack. It is the only way. Don't for the world urge her to let you accompany her, even though I don't like her to go alone. In the first place she would only retreat as you advanced, and in the second it would probably be salutary for her to stick among the clouds of heaven for a few hours, so I won't worry about the Wheel."

Jack took his hat, lying on the chair beside him. "I think I will go on down," he said. "There is a bare possibility, you know, that I may meet Mildred. If she should be later than you expect in coming home, you would better think of me as being the trap than of the Wheel."

"You won't meet," sighed Clover. "What a foolish girl she is!"

To tell the truth, Mildred could not resist a certain suspicion of her own foolishness, as she emerged upon the piazza a few seconds later, ready to start. She was conscious of disappointment that Jack was not in sight. It was a warm day, and starting off alone was not inspiriting. It required all her pride to pursue her intention.

"You won't have a good time," prophesied

Clover, and that strengthened her waning determination; so with a light response she set forth.

The Midway was a seething mass of humanity when she reached it, and she had hardly entered the street when she met her friend, Helen Eames. The latter greeted her eagerly, and began to talk about an entertainment Mildred had attended recently with Jack at her house.

Helen was voluble, and Mildred resented the tone in which she spoke of Jack, so she parted with her friend as soon as civility permitted, and passed on.

She began to feel that she was doing an absurd thing, to be forlornly and doggedly pursuing her way among the motley crowd, to the monotonous, rhythmic beat of drum, and the sing-song of strange voices.

Above their village the South Sea Islanders were pounding out their measures from a hollow log, and across the road the daintier Javanese rang muffled music from gongs and tinkling bells. Scenes and sounds had grown familiar to Mildred, but to-day she found neither truth nor poetry in them. Indian, Turk, and Bedouin passed her by, but she kept eyes ahead on the mammoth wheel, circling with ponderous deliberation. All she wished was to keep her word, take the skyward trip, and return home.

"All the girls are delighted with Mr. Van Tassel," Helen Eames had said.

"Silly thing! Does she suppose I will tell

him?" thought Mildred, too absorbed in her own cogitations to note the "vera gooda, vera nice, vera sheep," of the jewelry venders, the stentorian exhortations to enter the dance houses and theatres, or the incessant "hot! hot! hot!" of those that offered the thin waffle-like Zclabiah.

Mildred did not like to find in her own heart the wish that Van Tassel had been with her, that Helen Eames might see him in his proper place this morning. She must indeed have fallen from her high estate if she could wish to display an admirer to another girl. All men were her admirers. It had been a foregone conclusion so long that she had never been obliged to harbor a thought of jealousy or rivalry, and she instantly challenged and condemned this novel weakness.

The Midway Plaisance was a strange place for introspection, yet Mildred's thoughts were sufficiently absorbing. People were always apt to turn and look a second time at her exceptionally vigorous young beauty, but she passed on to-day, totally unconscious of the glances bent upon her.

Might it be true that she had finally alienated Jack by her persistently capricious treatment? "All the girls admired him!" He did not fancy any of them, she was sure. If he cared for any woman, it was Clover; and then the girl coolly and impartially compared her gentle, sympathetic, tender sister with herself. Mildred possessed a clear head, and as she dwelt upon her own and Clover's characteristics, a sermon seemed preached

to her amid that crowded babel, in a small voice which the noisy tongues could not drown.

"How would it be possible for a man in his senses to prefer me?" she thought, raising her eyes to a delicate, bell-hung minaret that pierced the cloudless sky. This novel humility impressed her with gravity.

But she had reached her destination. She moved up with the line to the ticket office that lay directly in her path, and bought her bit of pasteboard mechanically. In a moment more the movement of her fellow-passengers had brought her to the base of the wheel. Those who have stood in that position know the effect of looking straight up. Mildred, already feeling small, experienced a painful physical sense of being overwhelmed. The monster had paused for its cars to be filled, and she shrank from the prospect before her with unprecedented sensations. If she allowed herself to be shut up in that glass cab, it meant that two flights of two hundred and fifty feet skyward must be taken ere she could regain her liberty.

"I believe I am trying to be nervous," she said to herself coldly. "I did not know I was speaking truth to Jack this morning."

Oh, if only she were not the vainest and most obstinate of girls, this trip would be a pleasure instead of a pain!

The faint, steady color in her cheeks faded, but she walked into the car determinedly, and taking

one of its swinging chairs looked steadily through the glass front. The seats filled, the door was closed, and the scarcely perceptible motion began.

The roof of the next car began to swing into view. The inexorableness of the journey began to impress itself upon Mildred's mind. She was trying to turn away from the thought, when a well-known voice set her beating heart to throbbing faster.

"Why, this is fortunate," it said, with studied carelessness.

She started and lifted her eager eyes. There was Jack Van Tassel looking down upon her, triumphant, but as usual uncertain of his reception.

It has been said before that Mr. Van Tassel was a good-looking young man; but the radiance which seemed to Mildred now to invest every feature of his face, and each dark hair of his head, was certainly the figment of an excited imagination.

"Why, Jack," she gasped, and clasped her hands tightly in her lap for fear they might tell too much.

"You are pale," he said, and stooped with tender concern.

"Why — the sun was pretty warm, did n't you think?" she returned.

Jack did think so. He had had considerable time in which to test it, dodging from one side of the Plaisance to the other in that crowd, where

every one knows that his best friend had a faculty of dissolving from view even when he was supposed to be safely at one's side.

"Our poor heliotrope!" he said, glancing down at their decorations.

Mildred followed his gaze. The sprays on her jacket looked, she thought, much as she felt five minutes ago. "Let us throw them away," she answered, starting to withdraw the pin.

"Never," said Jack promptly, and the girl hesitated, then dropped her hand.

"Turn this way," he added. "See the University buildings, — a fine massive gray city that is going to be! Does n't it seem strange to think that college will ever be venerable and have traditions?"

From this time their attention was fully occupied with the panoramic view. The crowd of sightseers in the Plaisance became a congregation of umbrellas and parasols, ever lessening in size, and whitened in patches where a number of faces were upturned at once to behold the gyration of the wheel. The strange colors and shapes in architecture brought from many lands stood in startling conjunction on either hand. Beyond stretched the Fair city with its winding waterways, held safe in the great azure crescent of Lake Michigan's embrace.

Mildred's eyes sparkled with interest and pleasure. The color had returned to her face, and her spirits to their natural level. When their car

again neared earth she was glad, not sorry, that another circuit was in prospect to help her to a more satisfactory view of what had seemed but a tantalizing glimpse.

"The deed is done," said Jack, as at last the exit door of the car was opened, and the passengers passed from under the gigantic steel web and set foot on solid earth once more. "What is next on your programme?"

"I was going home," answered Mildred, rather hesitatingly.

"World's Fair finished?" asked Jack with a smile.

"I have seen almost everything in the Plaisance that I care for."

"But I have n't."

"What do you mean? Are you hinting?"

The girl smiled too, and somehow her expression was not so exasperating as at other times.

"Yes, I am hinting."

"Out with it, then. Speak up like a little man."

"Sometimes when I have spoken up like a little man you have made me feel like a little donkey."

"I don't see how you can like me at all, Jack," returned Mildred naïvely. "I made up my mind this morning that I was going to try to be more like Clover."

"Capital scheme!" exclaimed Van Tassel, with so much enthusiasm that Mildred felt disconcerted.

"I don't suppose the leopard can change his spots, though," she returned, rather stiffly.

"Let us go to Hagenbeck's and see," suggested Jack.

"It is rather far from here if we are going to do the shows with any system."

"Do you wish to, Mildred? Don't let me bore you."

"It only bores me to have you want me to be like somebody else."

Jack's lips drew together in an inaudible whistle, and it needed all Clover's warnings to aid him in holding the rein over himself. They were aimlessly walking east.

"But I honestly don't blame you," she added. "I have done nothing to make it pleasant for you here. In your own home it did n't seem necessary to treat you like a guest."

"You are right. There was no necessity in the matter; there is n't now. Perhaps you really wish to go home."

"Clover would n't go if she did wish it," Mildred smiled at him with a sidelong glance, "and so I will stay."

"Not with me," said Jack, lifting his hat and looking very firm as he paused in the road.

"Then you take it back that you wish me to be like little sister?" Mildred also paused, still smiling at him with her chin lifted.

"I want you to be honest."

"I am honest. I want to stay, you uncivil man."

CHAPTER XX.

THE MIDWAY PLAISANCE.

THE magic carpet in the Arabian Nights which transported its owner from one country to another, remote, in the space of a few seconds, was the property of all visitors to the Midway Plaisance. Mildred and Jack spent a little time amid the Swiss Alps, the former amusing herself by picking out for Jack's benefit localities where she and Clover had traveled. Then they looked in at the Bedouin Encampment and saw an old woman making bread. She whirled the dough on one hand until it spread into a very thin sheet. This she flapped over a cushion and from thence transferred it to the top of an inverted iron basin, where it baked above burning sticks. It looked when cooked like a delicate cracker, as it was broken up and passed around to the spectators.

A gigantic black, clothed entirely in red from his high leather boots to the rope-like twists of cloth about his head, lay stretched on a divan beside another fire smoking a narghileh.

"The bread is coming this way," remarked Mildred apprehensively. "Let us go into that door and see what is there."

Jack followed her. "This room, Miss Bryant,

is taken from a Damascus palace," he said. "I am surprised that you did n't recognize it at once. Observe these pieces of silver set into the walls, and the lavish number of mirrors. I believe a periodical lecturer appears in here."

"How much nicer to have it to ourselves, and guess about it. I have been standing so long, I can guess very closely what these gold-embroidered velvet divans are for," and Mildred stepped up on the dais at the end of the room and seated herself.

The ceiling was lofty, and in the centre of the room a fountain played. Beyond it was another dais surrounded by divans. The floors were covered with rugs. Outside, two Bedouins fenced with curious swords, the handles wrapped with twine, waving their small brass shields meanwhile with ostentatious gestures as they deliberately stepped about. Increasing in concentration and swift fury to the climax of the play, they paused unexpectedly, and seating themselves on the ground, fell to rolling cigarettes and making coffee over the small fire beside which lay the immobile black.

Shrill and dull arose the rhythm of the flageolets and the tambours. The click of castanets told that the dark-eyed women were dancing.

While Mildred and Jack still rested, an Arab in loose robes came in, and going to the fountain bathed his face and hands and dried them on a purple silk towel striped with yellow.

"How nice of him," said Mildred, acknowledging this touch added to the picture.

As they were passing out, one of the Bedouins, the cloth from his twisted turban hanging about his shoulders, paused near them with a baby in his arms, a curly-headed tot of a year old, around whose big brown eyes were drawn lines of artificial black. Mildred looked gently upon the child, and the father, smiling with pride and pleasure, glanced from one to the other; so she patted the baby.

"She is very pretty," she said, and he understood. His large gaze grew soft, and he nodded. Mildred looked at the dancing women with more interest. One of them, her chin tattooed with blue, was pointed out to her as the baby's mother.

A realization of the probable hardships and homesickness endured by these people in all the changes of scene and weather they had undergone assailed her; but it did not do to dwell too long on that side of life in the Plaisance. She only turned her sweetest smile once more on father and child, patted the baby's cheek, and followed Jack out.

To him it mattered little where they went. Each scene gained a glamour which, could the managers of the various enterprises have purchased it as a permanent adjunct to their attractions, would have ensured their fortunes. Passing from Arabia to the electric-lighted palms of the Moorish Palace, Van Tassel was prepared to admire everything. The labyrinth of mirrors which might in some moods have impressed him as a tiresome device, now triumphantly vindicated their right to be, by presenting him a hundred Mildreds so like the

original as to be an embarrassment of riches. Even the wax figures above stairs were interesting. The rise and fall of the Sleeping Beauty's gentle breast was a marvel.

From the various tricks and optical illusions of the Moorish Palace they betook themselves to Hawaii, and stood together in darkness on the borders of a lava lake from whose centre shot living flames from the volcano's heart toward the lurid sky.

A priest, a shadowy figure, came forth among the gray rocks, and chanted a prayer to the dreadful goddess of fire. In the remote distance gleamed the peaceful blue waters of the Pacific. Jack would have been willing to stand for hours here by Mildred, in the weird dusky silence broken only by the monotonous chant, for the longer one lingered the more perfect grew the illusion; but she took him away presently, and in a trice the island of Hawaii had vanished and Egypt was gained via the western entrance to Cairo Street.

They passed in before the Temple of Luxor, in front of which a brazen-lunged American showman was reeling off a highly-colored description of the attractions within.

"Mummy of Rameses about the fifth on your right!" repeated Jack, laughing. "Let us postpone Rameses until he can be located a little more definitely."

"Yes, I want you to see the Soudanese pickaninny," said Mildred, and they went over to the

tent where the jolly little black baby hopped about among her elders, shaking the girdle of feathers and shells about her hips and dimpling with delight in the applause and laughter she called forth. More interesting than the Soudanese were the Nubians, who came in from the dark huts adjoining, and danced in the same tent. One of these in particular attracted Jack's eye.

"What a splendid woman, Mildred!" he exclaimed. "What an artist's model she would make."

The object of his admiration was tall, straight as an arrow, dressed in a long robe of white, and wore large hoop earrings. She had symmetrical features of haughty mould, and was very dark, with thick crinkled black locks free from the feathers, shells and twine, braided among the Soudanese tresses. She was an impressive figure standing immovable upon the stage among the dancers.

"Like a splendid bronze!" said Jack, gazing at the delicate proud face with all his eyes. The Nubian smiled, disclosing the most perfect teeth imaginable, and Van Tassel regarded her with growing admiration.

"I tell you, Mildred," he said enthusiastically, "if that woman could have been brought up in a different environment she would have been superb. Fancy having her well-trained for a servant? How would you like her to pass you your coffee at breakfast?"

Mildred laughed. "What a pity that I am not a reporter," she said as they left the tent. "You could be worked into a taking newspaper article, Jack. A young scion of one of Chicago's well-known families is maturing a plan to abduct the chief of the tribe of Nubians in Cairo Street. It is feared there will be an uprising, and so forth, and so forth."

"A feminine chief? I don't blame them."

"No, sir. Your superb bronze woman, your artist's model, is Mohammed Ali, the chief of the Nubians."

Jack looked incredulous. "You expect me to believe that?"

"Not if you wish to go back and inquire. It is true, though. Mohammed is a friend of mine. He was good enough, when Clover and I looked into his hut, to show us how he polishes those perfect teeth of his with a little stick. Did you ever see anything so shining? You can buy his photograph, if you like, at one of these booths, and keep it as a memento of Mr. Van Tassel's" —

"Look ou-at. Look ou-at for Mary Anderson," called a donkey boy in a blue gown.

"You would n't run over me, would you, Toby?" asked Mildred.

The boy trudging by through the crowd, showed his ivories in a smile of recognition, and urged his little white donkey onward in the narrow, crooked, brick-paved street.

Such a throng, such a noise, only the memories

of the experienced can witness to. Camels swung along between the irregular houses, the warning cries of their drivers mingling with the monotonous sing-song of the venders in the closely packed booths.

Egyptian flower girls, veiled to the eyes, plied their trade. A conjurer pushed his way amid the gazers, a hen's egg sticking in his eye and another clinging behind his jaw. The rhythm of the Midway sounded from two drums slung at either side of a gaudily caparisoned camel, and was sung monotonously from the booth of the much-vaunted Oriental sweetmeat: —

> "Alla gooda bum-bum,
> Vera nice candy,
> Beautifula bum-bum,
> Vera good candy,"

repeated *ad libitum* by the swarthy Arab presiding.

Mildred and Jack glanced into the showcases as they passed onward, the former restraining her companion from purchasing specimens of brasswork, filigree silver, ornaments, and embroidery. But once Mildred exclaimed with pleasure over a small hanging-lamp of dull silver.

"I will take it," said Jack to the instantly voluble salesman.

"Not for me; no don't," protested his companion.

"You must have a souvenir," returned Van

Tassel, smiling over the word which had grown hateful by iteration to all Fair-goers.

"Please don't get it," said the girl; but the very tassel on their Oriental's fez was active in his zeal to wrap up the parcel for this gentleman who did not bargain.

The foreign fashion of changing a price by the beating-down process was one with which many Americans amused themselves when they found it was expected; but Jack was in that state of mind when an article which had the rare fortune to please Mildred was above rubies.

She dissembled her satisfaction, however. "If I had let you buy everything you have started to since we came into the street, we should have had to charter a donkey," she began.

"Look ou-at — look ou-at for Yanka Doodoo," bawled Achmet, the donkey boy, directly upon them.

"I don't like to feel that I must n't admire anything," finished the girl as Jack stepped between her and the little quadruped who carried a much-excited and curled maiden of five.

"I like this lamp so much, I don't know that I shall let you have it," responded Van Tassel serenely, as he took the package. "Look up, Mildred. What a deep blue the sky gets between those irregular roofs."

"Only one of us can look up at a time, while the other keeps watch of the menagerie."

"There appears to be an extra crowd yonder," remarked Jack.

"Oh, that is the camel-stand. Hear the people laughing. How can anybody be willing to furnish so much amusement to the public as to mount one of those beasts? There is always just such a crowd there."

"Well, are we through here?" asked Van Tassel.

"What? Are you weary of Cairo Street?"

"Not if you are not; but it is rather warm, and there is a good deal of a mob, and I have inhaled enough attar of roses to last until my next incarnation. I thought perhaps you might be tired, standing."

"I am."

"There is n't a place to sit down, either," said Jack, looking around.

"That is just what almost every one thinks. I don't know how soon people will find out my enchanted palace, but they had n't done so last week."

"Well, now, an enchanted palace is exactly what I am looking for," returned Van Tassel hopefully. "How did you learn the open sesame?"

"The open sesame is" — Mildred paused apologetically. "I am sorry to have to say it, but it is the only prosaic feature, — the open sesame is fifteen cents."

They moved along toward the crowd by the camel stand, and here in the noisiest, busiest portion of the winding street, Mildred led her companion into an open door which revealed a long, blank corridor. The dragon guarding it was a most

commonplace American. Most people whose curiosity led them to look into the uninviting hallway were quickly frightened off by the placard stating the fifteen-cent admission fee. There was so much to see, and time and money were so limited, little wonder that the obvious attractions of the street decided them not to explore this side-show.

Mildred and Jack, leaving the din and bustle behind, passed the easily placated dragon, and at the end of the low, empty corridor found themselves in an open, floored court, out of which led a flight of stairs. A large earthen jar filled with water stood at one side over a smaller vessel into which the water filtered in crystal drops through the porous clay. Palms and lilies stood about, and edged the entire length of the staircase. It was very quiet here, and Van Tassel looked about him curiously.

Mildred gave him a smiling glance of mystery. "Let us go up and see Sayed Ibrahim," she said.

"Look here," returned Jack, frowning and smiling, "you are altogether too sophisticated."

"Sayed does n't think so," answered the girl, and they proceeded upstairs. Entering a hallway where was a heavy bronze door of fabulous age and richness of design, they were met by a tall handsome Oriental in robes and fez, whose melting eyes lighted as they recognized Mildred. He bowed low.

"How do you do, Sayed Ibrahim; I have brought another friend to see the beautiful house."

He bowed again and held aside a portière of cloth-of-gold. The visitors passed within and found themselves in a spacious shadowy room with lofty arched ceiling. The windows were unglazed and shielded by curious hand-carved lattice work. Thick rugs were upon the floor, and small tables inlaid with pearl and ivory stood about. On a larger one were a number of tiny and precious coffee cups, held in little brass stands. Long-stemmed pipes hung upon the walls, and divans or cushions upon the floor invited to repose. Rich portières divided the suite of rooms one from another.

The light was dim, coming out of the glaring street, and the colors in rugs and hangings were tempered in the wonderful Oriental weaving. There were no other visitors. Jack looked at the swarthy cicerone who stood ready to answer their questions.

"I do not wonder," he said to Mildred, "that you call this mysterious spot enchanted. It is a chapter out of the Arabian Nights."

"Yes; are you ready to come back to the nineteenth century? The nineteenth century in Egypt, you know. I would n't make your fall too sudden and profound."

Mildred moved to the broad window-seat which was covered with a rug, and smiled at the Arab. It was a language he understood as clearly as the Harvard graduate, and he hastened forward and threw open the lattice.

Van Tassel seated himself opposite Mildred, and together they looked down upon the madding crowd.

Their position was just opposite the camel stand, and from their height they commanded a view of the kaleidoscopic life of the street. The bystanders pressed about the cushions upon which the camels knelt to take on or be relieved of their burdens, and seemed to find never-failing entertainment in the behavior of those intrepid passengers who embarked for the adventurous journey to the end of the street and back again.

Mildred and Jack in their romantic eyrie held their sides with laughter over the absurdities enacted before their eyes.

"If any trip ever deserved the name of pleasure exertion, that is the one," said Mildred, wiping her eyes, while she watched two girls who evidently took their lives in their hands as they seated themselves on the cushioned back of one of the patient beasts. The Arab driver cried out, and tapped the creature on the neck.

"Now then," said Jack, "see the ship of the desert let out the reefs in its legs!"

Shrieks arose from the maidens at the first ascent, wilder and wilder cries and clutchings at the second and third, and by the time the animal had reached the stature of a camel and swung away, the whole crowd was uproarious, only quieting to observe the next pair embark.

"Miss Amelia Edwards says the camel is a

beast that hates its rider," said Jack. "I wonder what are the private prejudices of the Cairo Street variety."

"As if you could n't see!" answered Mildred. "It would n't be half so funny if the camels did n't curl their lips and look so supercilious all the time those idiots are shrieking so. 'What fools these mortals be!' is the sentiment their faces express chronically. Poor things! Just think, that they are only intended to kneel once or twice a day, and here they have to go down every three minutes. How they would execrate Columbus if they only knew how! Oh, look at that old lady! It is a shame to let her go," added Mildred. "They will laugh at her, too."

"Never mind. She will be the heroine of Perkins Point, or wherever it is, all the rest of her life."

"She looks scared, Jack. Oh, dear! her bonnet is falling off. I wish she would n't. Why, there are Clover and Mr. Page! Do you see them? Let us go out on the balcony." Mildred left the window-seat, and Jack followed.

"Is there a balcony? Why did n't you say so?"

"Because I am economical of my pleasant surprises." The watchful Sayed threw open double doors of the lattice work, and revealed a small, square balcony upon which the visitors stepped into the sunlight. The fanciful minarets and spires of the street gleamed against an azure sky.

Clover and Gorham had paused just below, also

interested in the venturesome old lady, who was followed by cheers as her scornful camel bore her up the street.

Jack took advantage of the temporary lull that followed, to whistle the bit from "Carmen."

Clover instantly looked up and called the attention of her companion.

Mildred beckoned.

"Clover knows the way," said Jack.

"Most certainly she does. We Chicagoans aren't Fair visitors. We are Fair livers."

"Don't be so toplofty, mademoiselle. What am I, if not a Chicagoan?"

"Oh, a sort of deserter."

"'I deny the allegation and despise the allegator.' I am going to marry a Chicago girl, and live here all my days."

"Have you asked her?"

Van Tassel, perhaps reminded by the neighborhood of his mentor, forbore from replying to the saucy smiling eyes, and here Clover and Gorham appeared at the door of the balcony.

"Come out," said Mildred, "it holds five. Is this the way you visit the Anthropological Building?"

"Why, this is all right," answered Page. "'Midway Plaisance, Department M. Ethnology.' Look on the catalogue, and you will see this is all a part of the Anthropological exhibit."

"And apart from it," suggested Mildred, "which certainly is in its favor. I thought you

would see enough ghastly pictures and graveyards and mummies in a short time."

"The exhibits in the gallery are wonderful and beautiful," said Clover. "I don't believe you know what you are talking about."

"I do, my dear. I have oh'd and ah'd over them all, from the dainty infinitesimal sea creatures on pink cotton to the mammoth. I felt so much obliged to him. He really made me feel small. Then the realistic cliff, with the birds and beasts artistically disposed, and the waterfall and flowing brook. I 've seen them. How long have you been here?"

"Not very long. We have been watching the antics of the women on the camels, and the long-legged men on those tiny donkeys."

"A great deal of human nature comes out in Cairo Street," said Page with interest. "One sees a great variety of motives, and many grades of self-control by that camel stand. See that little woman going now to take a trip. Is it amusement she 's after? Not at all. Note the determination in her face. Duty calls and she obeys. Dollars to doughnuts she does n't scream, Jack."

"I 'm out of doughnuts; but I 'll bet you the supper she does. I have n't seen a quiet one yet."

"Done! You will see one now."

"That girl is from the East," said Mildred.

"I am sure of it," returned Page, gazing with pleased curiosity at his protégée, who stood waiting her turn; "but what brings you to that conclusion?"

"The trimming of her hat looks as if it were nailed on. They say all Boston women's bonnet trimmings are nailed on."

"She is a character," said Page. "Now I would like to know what her motive is in riding that camel."

Jack guffawed. "I am sure you would. You will be asking her the next thing we know."

"Well, it is no idle one, I 'm sure of that."

"Perhaps she is a school teacher," suggested Van Tassel, "and wants to go home and tell her scholars how pitch-and-toss in Cairo Street differs from the usual game."

"There she goes," said Clover, and they all watched the fair-faced girl approach and mount a camel whose expression for utter boredom rather outdid its neighbors. At the driver's cry it gathered itself convulsively. The rider lurched forward. Her back was to the watchers on the balcony, but they could not hear a sound from her. She lurched backward, still without a cry, and they were not surprised when the camel swung around to see her face still set in its determined and composed lines while the crowd looked on in silence.

"I shall enjoy that supper very much, Jack," said Gorham.

"You haven't won it yet. Wait till she comes back. When his Nibs kneels down is the time a girl's lungs really come into play. After she thinks every joint in his body has doubled up there

comes one unexpected plunge that fetches the most dignified of them every time. They say a sailor came in here the other day and after riding one of our humped friends said that the camel played cup-and-ball with him the whole length of the street, and only missed him twice."

In a few minutes, back came Gorham's heroine, still composed as she rocked back and forth clinging to the rope which the driver had handed her for a support.

"Now that supper hangs in the balance," remarked Page.

"I 'm safe enough," returned Jack nonchalantly, "and I assure you my appetite is in prime condition."

The camel, slowly winking and holding his nose aloft, approached his cushion, and began the series of spasmodic collapses which made its rider look as though at the mercy of a rocking-chair gone mad. She pitched wildly, but valiantly held her peace. Even Jack had to admit that she did not make a murmur, and all his protests against playing off a dumb girl on him were unheeded as Page gazed benignly down on the young woman, who smiled sweetly and triumphantly as she rejoined her friends.

"Five minutes of four," said Mildred. "The wedding procession will soon pass. Are n't we fortunate to have the balcony? Do you see, other people are daring to visit the house and taking our window-seat?"

"Your window-seat! That is pretty good," said Clover, turning toward the speaker with an arch smile. "We thought that was our window-seat, did n't we, Jack?"

She saw the color flash over her sister's face in the instant before the girl controlled herself. She wondered if Jack had seen the novel evidence of feeling before Mildred turned to him coolly.

"So you have been here before," she remarked. "Why did n't you mention it?"

"Clover and I looked in a short time only, the evening we took supper in Germany," answered Van Tassel. "I did not examine the curious place at all then, so this is really my first view of it."

Clover turned away to conceal her amusement. Jack in his embarrassment had implied all she could have asked from the disciplinary standpoint.

But now the attention of the quartette was claimed by the wedding procession, which was seen coming down the street, the camels nearly hidden under their gaudy, bulky trappings, and the din of the tom-toms filling the air. When the music, dancing, and sword play were ended, Mildred spoke to her sister.

"What have you done with Mr. and Mrs. Page?"

"They went to the Chinese theatre, and we have promised to meet them in Old Vienna and take supper there."

"Our dear Jack will have to take supper with us now," declared Gorham cordially.

"I suppose," said Van Tassel, addressing

Mildred, "that Old Vienna is an oft-repeated experience to you?"

"At least I shall not pretend that it is a novelty," she answered without looking at him, and Jack was silent. He even colored, but it was not with proper contrition. It was a flush of pleasure that overspread his countenance as his brown eyes sent a quick glance into Clover's.

CHAPTER XXI.

OLD VIENNA.

"How remarkable that you met Mildred," said Clover to Jack, after the four had wended their way out of Cairo and turned west.

"It was a lucky chance," replied Van Tassel.

"Where did you meet?" The fun in his face gave Clover her first suspicion.

"In the Ferris Wheel. Was n't it a coincidence that we should have chosen the same cab? And I 'll tell you in confidence, Clover, that I think Mildred was considerably impressed with his Wheelship."

"Why should you make a confidence of that?" asked Mildred nonchalantly. "We are all impressed, are n't we?"

"Not to the verge of pallor, Milly."

"Don't call me Milly. No one does that but Clover."

"Were you really frightened, Mildred?" asked her sister with much interest.

"Why do you ask me? Ask Jack. He evidently knows all about it."

"No, I insist on referring you to Mildred herself. She scorns petty deceits of all kinds. I cannot be relied on to tell the absolute truth."

Mildred looked at the speaker with a dangerous sparkle in her eyes. "Why don't you give Clover her present?" she asked suddenly.

"A present for me? Why, hurry," exclaimed Clover. "What new extravagance have you been committing, Milly?"

"It is n't I this time, it is Jack. He has bought you the most adorable little silver hanging-lamp you ever saw. Open it, Jack; or shall we wait till we are seated in Old Vienna?"

"You told him I wanted it, you naughty girl."

"No, I did n't." Mildred was bubbling over with mischievous satisfaction in Van Tassel's struggles to look bland. "It was purely spontaneous on his part. I even went so far as to urge him not to get it. Did n't I, Jack?"

Van Tassel's reply was scarcely audible; but they had reached the guard, who with puffed sleeves and feathered hat stood motionless, spear in hand, before the entrance to the Vienna of two hundred years ago.

Inside they found the Pages, standing before one of the many open shops which formed the first floors of the weather-stained, peaked, and turreted houses.

"Hilda is buying a spoon," announced Mr. Page as his friends approached; "but that goes without saying. I have kept careful count, and this is the seventy-seventh she has purchased while with me. Of course there may be others. I can't tell what pleasant surprises may be awaiting me when we get home."

"How was the Chinese theatre?" asked Gorham, while Clover and Mildred gravitated naturally to Mrs. Page's side to lend her their aid in deciding between the merits of two spoons she was examining.

"Immense; you must go."

"You must n't go unless you want to be driven crazy with noise," put in Hilda. "Robert says I am deficient in the sense of humor, but you positively can't think in that place. There was a Chinese-American in the audience acting as an interpreter, and I suppose he saw that Robert was interested; so he just stayed with us, and put the crowning touch to the confusion by explaining the play at a pitch to be heard above the squealing music and the shrieking actors."

"Women's parts all taken by men, of course," explained her husband, "and they jabber in a high monotonous falsetto without any change of countenance except an occasional attack of pathetic strabismus. Two lovers meet after a separation of ten years. They start, then with two simultaneous squeaks fall backward in a swoon, feet to feet, and lie there with their elaborately dressed heads sticking up in the air, while a supe runs in with wooden supports which he tucks under their necks. The interpreter explained: 'Of course they cannot spoil their hair!' Ha! ha! It was great; and as for the costumes and hangings, they would stand alone for the gold and silver embroidery in them. Confess, Hilda, they were consoling."

"Yes, they were; and so was the baby we saw upstairs in the Joss-house. He was ten months old, with a black tuft of hair on top of his head exactly like the Chinese dolls, and was dressed in green silk trousers and a red silk shirt."

"You must have wanted to steal him," said Mildred.

"That is what his mother thought, I am sure. He lay asleep in a little wagon, and when she heard me exclaim, she flew out from behind a curtain with a very suspicious expression on her pretty face. Yes, she was really pretty, and dimpled, and young; and her hands were loaded with rings. Robert, just look here one minute. Don't you think the filigree handle is the prettier?"

"My dear, I ate too many bananas once, and have never since been able to endure the sight of them. If you knew the sentiments with which a souvenir spoon inspires me, you would tremble."

"I will take the filigree one," said Mrs. Page, with a sigh of relief.

The six ate supper together at a table pleasantly distant from the fine German orchestra. Feathery bits of white cloud scudded over the blue above them. Picturesque gables and weather-beaten façades illuminated with the decorations of a bygone time closed them in from the outside world with such an atmosphere of antiquity, that even the dignified beauty of Handel's Largo, as its stately measures pealed forth on the evening air, seemed an anachronism.

Mildred sat at Jack's right hand.

"What shall I put down for you?" he asked, looking up from the order he was writing. "I found nothing on the card injurious enough to be appropriate."

Mildred smiled slightly as she glanced over the menu.

"You deserved a worse punishment than that," she answered.

"It is true it was no great punishment. I should like to give Clover all Cairo Street if she wants it."

Clover was sitting opposite between the other men, and the music effectually concealed from her the above colloquy.

"Hurry up, Jack," she said, leaning forward; "they keep you waiting forever here. Give her bread and milk if she can't decide. It is good for the young."

While the party were waiting for their meal to be brought, Jack, now at ease in the situation, produced the silver lamp, which received much praise as it was passed about.

Gorham, Mildred's other neighbor, turned to her. "Your sister suggests that you must have practiced much self-control," he remarked. "She says this is just the sort of lamp you have been searching for."

"Do you hear that, Jack?" asked Mildred demurely. "I am afraid Jack does not appreciate me, Mr. Page."

Mildred, ever since the evening of her confiden-

tial talk with Gorham, had carried the half-nettled, wholly amused consciousness that he was regarding her with considerations of her search for that affinity she had described. She felt sure he would not repeat their talk to Jack; but if he should! The thought brought a stinging red to her cheeks.

Page was not thinking of her now, however. This little circumstance of the gift of the lamp impressed him. That Jack should, while with Mildred, buy this bauble which the latter coveted and give it to Clover, looked as though Hilda's convictions might be correct. As he caught a serene glance from Clover's violet eyes it suddenly seemed to him very improbable that an impressionable fellow like his cousin should not dream by day and night of that pure and beautiful face.

Jack was not worthy of her, he could not precisely state to himself why; and he ran over his acquaintances in his mind to see if he could find one the consideration of whom would rouse less antagonism. He had not succeeded when the waiter appeared with the supper.

"What are you indefatigable people going to do next?" asked Robert Page, lighting a cigar when their meal was finished. "I am extremely comfortable and good-natured now, but I warn you I shall turn dangerous if any one suggests the illumination. To be asked just to step over from Old Vienna to the Court of Honor sounds pleasant. It was played on me once when I was a tenderfoot; but I 'm not to be roped into any such pilgrimage

to-night. If I was n't a married man, I should sit right here and listen to the music, and see the Wheel go round, until it was time to go to my little bed."

"What nonsense!" remarked Hilda. "If you were n't married you would be urging me to go with you in a gondola."

"My dear, where would be the use? You know the gondolas are all bespoken by this time. What a sweet consciousness it is, by the way," added Page, sighing restfully.

"We are going, though, some night," returned his wife. "Before we leave the White City, you must take me in a gondola and hold my hand."

"See the lengths to which this woman's frenzy for spoons carries her! Why, I 'll hold your hand now, my dear. Any suggestion which presupposes so little exertion as that will find me in an affirmative state of mind every time."

Hilda glanced at his offered hand scornfully. "We have n't the stage-setting," she replied. "Be careful, Robert Page, or you will frighten Mildred out of getting married at all."

"Is that true, Miss Mildred? Oh, I don't believe it. You are so level-headed you must see the situation in the right light. Did you ever hear the simile of the horse-car? When a man is trying to catch a horse-car and afraid it is going to escape him, he waves his arms, shouts, hurries, and disturbs himself generally. After he has caught the conveyance, if he continued to behave in the same

perturbed fashion he would be set down as a lunatic. You see the point, of course?"

Mildred pursed her lips and shook her head. "You are a very audacious man," she answered.

"Now Jack is n't smoking," continued Page argumentatively. "That indicates the restlessness of the man who is afraid he will arrive too late at the street corner."

"It indicates that I am not going to stay here," returned Van Tassel.

"Whither away, restless one?"

"You will have to ask Miss Bryant. She is showing me the World's Fair to-day."

"Not after your perfidious behavior," said Mildred. "I was too sophisticated, was I? Oh, for shame!"

"Do you speak to me of perfidy!" exclaimed Jack.

"Well, sha'n't we all go somewhere together?" suggested Gorham.

"No, I think we sha'n't, dear brother," replied Robert mildly.

"Do you want to stay, Hilda?" asked Gorham. "Are n't you growing tired of hearing Zwei Bier? Come with us."

"No, thanks. I will stay here until it bores me, and then I will give Robert his choice of selecting another souvenir spoon or taking me out."

So the other four left their seats and moved away to the martial strains of Die Wacht am Rhein.

Clover found herself beside Jack a moment.

"It was a shame about the lamp," she murmured.

"What?" returned Van Tassel, looking uncomfortably into her roguish eyes.

"I saw how it was. Too bad; but that is another thing she will repent at leisure."

"How did you know?"

"By Mildred's impish dimple. She has one just above her lip that never shows except when she is in mischief. At first I was taken in; but after a moment I saw the imp, and then I knew."

"What a wonderful sight the Wheel is with its double row of electric lights," said Mildred to Gorham.

"What — yes; it has been rather warm," he replied; this irrelevance being due to the effect upon him of observing Clover's murmured colloquy with Jack.

Mildred stared. When she made a remark to a man, she was accustomed to find him attentive.

Page continued with another inexcusable speech.

"I wonder if perhaps Mrs. Van Tassel would like to go somewhere with Jack."

"I believe Jack considers himself otherwise engaged this evening," returned Miss Bryant with hauteur.

"Oh — oh yes." Gorham's eyes fell upon the speaker with an expression which suggested that he had just become aware of her, and until this moment had been talking to himself.

A light broke upon Mildred. There was but one possible explanation of such ignoring of her own preëminent right to homage.

"They are both in love with her!" she thought, and the slight pang that came with the idea surprised her.

Clover and Jack, with the laughter on their lips, stepped forward and joined the others.

"Have you any wish, Mrs. Van Tassel?" asked Page.

"No, let us drift until something tempts us." They soon lost sight of Mildred and Jack in that stream of humanity which flowed in both directions along the Midway between the soft arc-moons. They left behind them the great Wheel, slowly revolving in sparkling light as though, sweeping through the heavens, myriad stars had caught thickly along its edges and were borne on to earth.

"Let me carry that precious lamp," said Page, taking Clover's parcel.

"I would not let Jack keep it, for fear he might give it to Mildred," she explained.

Her companion looked surprised.

"Jack is a little weak and indulgent where Mildred is concerned," said Clover.

Page did not know what to reply. Hilda had assured him in days past that no one could help seeing that Mrs. Van Tassel was unwilling Jack should ask Mildred to go to the Fair with him, and now this frank avowal of jealousy perplexed him greatly.

"But what — what mystifies me, Mrs. Van Tassel," he said hesitatingly, "is that you should care for a gift — but there are limits to a man's right to express his thoughts."

Clover laughed out mirthfully. "Analyze me. I am perfectly willing, only it will necessitate exposing the fact that my sister is a very saucy girl."

Page regarded her so earnestly that he nearly stumbled over a wheeled chair that grazed him.

"I don't understand it at all," he said seriously.

"Of course not. Well, I will tell you. Jack bought this lamp for Mildred; and she, to punish him for some offense, forced him to give it to me in the way you heard. She does n't know that I saw through it; but now I do not propose that she shall have the fun and the lamp too."

Page found the Midway grow a trifle cheerier under this disclosure. "Of course not," he answered; then, after a moment's thoughtfulness: "That was a strange prank for your sister to play," he added. "I fear I should n't have known how to yield as easily to the joke as Jack did."

"Oh, he stuttered a good deal, poor fellow," laughed Clover. "Mildred is a spoiled child."

"Not so superficial, though, as one would at first believe," returned Gorham. "There is plenty of depth to her nature. Society educates a girl to seem shallow, that is all."

Clover looked surprised and pleased. She glanced at Page with quick, responsive feeling.

"It is very nice of you to see through Mildred," she said, and Page felt a strange glow under her approval.

"The folly of Hilda," he thought, "in supposing this woman could be jealous of another!"

There was something too in the quiet joyousness of her sphere which assured him that whatever were her sentiments for Jack, she was not longing for his society now. She was content, he felt it, and the knowledge was bliss to him.

"I wonder how soon we are going to be attracted," remarked Clover, after they had walked a minute in silence.

Page turned to her suddenly. "What do you mean by that?" he asked so eagerly that the surprised color rushed to his companion's face.

"Why, we were waiting, were n't we, for one of these side shows to tempt us beyond the point of resistance," she answered, with the glibness with which a woman can skim over a moment which threatens too much.

"Well, to tell the truth I had forgotten what we were doing beyond sauntering together in this very interesting, motley crowd. Is n't it strange how completely alone we are in such a place?"

"Or might be, if it were not for the wheeled chairs," said Clover. "It is n't safe to become introspective here."

"Was I?" anxiously. "Have I been silent, Mrs. Van Tassel? My thoughts often play me tricks. Hilda is always saying that I am 'queer.'

I don't know just what she means, but if you would be kind enough to mention it if I do anything you don't like, I should be — it would be a great favor."

"You are very flattering," returned Clover, turning away to smile. "What a temptation you offer me!"

"Then I do offend you?" he exclaimed with frank consternation.

"No, no, I did n't mean that. I was only thinking what a temptation you hold out to a woman to mould a fellow-creature into the form she likes. But I know what an ignis fatuus that alluring idea is. Men do not alter themselves to please women."

"I should say," returned Page ruminatively, "that you are wrong. I know that Hilda has changed Robert in many ways, materially."

"By the force of years of influence, yes; but your brother did not know what was going on. I am certain of that."

"I should suppose," said Page earnestly, "that a man could not rest in the knowledge that he was doing something offensive to the woman he loves."

"Yes, you would suppose so," agreed Clover. "My knowledge of the truth is gathered from observation, not experience, as you know. I reverenced Mr. Van Tassel too completely to think of desiring to change him. In my married life it was myself I wished to alter; but I have seen a good deal of young married people, and — well, tell me, Mr. Page, did you ever hear Hilda say that she would be glad if her husband did not smoke?"

"Yes," replied Gorham, and said no more.

"Now I begin to feel a strong temptation, Mr. Page. How is it with you? Are you prepared to resist the Javanese village?"

"I have not been in there."

"Oh, you must n't miss that. I wonder you have been able to pass that charming, fantastic, bamboo entrance. The lightness and simplicity of this life makes it to me the most charming in the Plaisance."

They entered the gateway and came suddenly upon the quiet attractions of the dainty straw village. Yes, it was still, here; still enough to hear the muffled music of the water-wheel. Clover and Page stood a moment in the hush, listening to its tinkle, and the plashing of the wavelets. A small, soft-footed Javanese occasionally passed them.

"I wish that I smoked," broke out Gorham suddenly.

"Here will be an opportunity," returned Clover. "You will be offered cigarettes at every turn in Java."

Page's seriousness was unmoved. "I want you to believe that I would give it up if you asked me."

Mrs. Van Tassel's serene heart quickened its pace, but she laughed. "Is n't it a pity that I shall have to remain incredulous?" then she hastened on, vaguely afraid of her companion. "Don't misunderstand me, please. I was not criticising your brother a minute ago. Do you know you have formed a shocking habit of frankness in me?

You have searched out my thoughts and opinions so many times that now you have only to suggest a subject and I pour out my ideas. I think I ought to have kept my observations to myself on this topic; but since I have said so much, I don't wish to leave you with the notion that I think your brother and men like him monsters of selfishness. A woman makes an absurd mistake to marry a smoking man, and then to be grieved because he refuses when she artlessly requests him to give up the habit; but a girl nearly always thinks that all she need do is to marry a man in order to make him over into anything she likes. I tell you, Mr. Page, it is the result of my observations that all the voluntary changes a man makes at the request of his beloved are made before — before he catches the horse-car."

Gorham smiled. "But I don't think Robert ought to smoke, since Hilda" —

"Pardon me. I am going to defend the absent. Did he smoke while they were engaged?"

"Yes."

"Very well. Now, do you wish to hear some words of wisdom?"

"Yes, indeed."

"Here they are. If Hilda disliked tobacco, she should have said so, then; and she probably did. When she found Mr. Page would not give up the habit, she should have weighed the question in her mind as to whether the matter of smoking were going to affect her happiness seriously. If she

thought it would, she should have broken her engagement. The great point is, that if she decided to marry him she should have realized that she took him as he was, tobacco and all, and would be likely to have rather more than less of it for the rest of her life."

"A man is a selfish brute," remarked Gorham.

"Sometimes; but he has the same right a woman has to choose between his habit and his love; that is, if the woman speaks in time."

"Hilda does not particularly dislike cigar smoke," said Page, "but she thinks smoking is bad for Robert. I wonder if all men are as thick-skinned as you say. Now, there is Jack. Do you believe he would not fling all his cigars into the lake for — for you?"

"Yes, indeed; so long as there were plenty more to be had."

"No, Mrs. Van Tassel, be serious; and for the moment pardon personalities. If Jack were engaged to you" —

He waited, gazing at Clover. She smiled at him and said, "Well, if Jack were engaged to me?"

Page swallowed some impediment to speech.

"And you should earnestly ask him not to smoke, can you doubt the result?"

Clover shrugged her shoulders. "No, I am afraid I can't. Jack is a gentleman, and such an impulsive, affectionate fellow, I know pretty well what he would do, supposing of course that he were very earnestly and deeply in love with me."

"Which he is, of course." The dismal exclamation broke from Page unawares.

Clover stared at him. "Oh no, he is n't," she said gently, after a minute.

"What!"

"No, indeed. Jack and I always were good comrades, and always will be, I hope."

Page suddenly took both her hands excitedly, and laughed aloud.

"Pardon me," he said, sobering suddenly. "I was forgetting where we were." He drew her hand within his arm and they started to walk. "Pretty little light things these bamboo houses are," he continued. "What a gentle life they suggest. I don't know exactly why I am so glad to hear what you tell me, Mrs. Van Tassel. I was under a mistaken idea that you and Jack were — and it is no reflection upon Jack that I am relieved. He is a fine fellow. There is no man I like better; so it is — it is really difficult for me to explain why — why" —

"Never mind trying, Mr. Page," returned Clover, smiling softly at a cage of doves outside a cottage door. "It is n't necessary," she added demurely, "to label every feeling one has."

"It is a sort of habit of mine," he returned apologetically. "What is this long straw building?"

"The theatre."

"Will you come in?"

"Yes; I have not visited it, but I hear it is interesting."

So they entered the well-filled hall just as the performance was beginning, and were fortunate enough to find seats near the stage. At both sides of the latter were placed rows of puppets with grotesque faces, featured like the masks worn by most of the actors. At the back of the stage were ranged the musicians, sitting cross-legged in rows before their highly ornamented instruments. These were soft-toned gongs, bells, and strings of strange fashion, and instead of being solely noticeable for rhythm, like most of the music of the Midway, one heard from this orchestra plaintive harmonies and cadences which seemed but an amplification of the minor pleading in the water-wheel's play.

The curtained entrances at the side back of the stage looked too small and low to admit the actors, but there was room and to spare even for the men, and still more for the dainty brown dancing-girls who soon glided forth. They were exceedingly pretty and graceful, dressed in gold-embroidered velvet trousers to the knee, and short skirts. Their dimpled shoulders and arms were bare, and their fringed sashes were used to fling over their wrists in the fascinating monotonous gestures with which they pointed their little hands as they stepped about in their white-stockinged feet.

The performance was all in pantomime, the lines being read by some one hidden behind a screen in the centre of the stage. The orchestra men in their calico gowns and turbans often smiled at

some sally of the clown; but Clover and Page did not need to comprehend in order to be amused. There was something tenderly comical in the pompous movements of the little people gesturing in stiff, studied fashion. From time to time the dancing-girls would appear, gliding hither and yon, and posing to the tinkling music.

"This is surprisingly pretty," said Page.

"I want one of those brown girls to take home as bricabrac," returned Clover. "Are n't they the roundest, prettiest little creatures! Really, the whole thing seems strange enough to be a sight in fairy-land; and do you hear that enchanting rustle of trees above our heads?"

The light summer breeze was stirring the dried straw and grass that thatched the roof, with the lulling effect of wind in a forest.

"I am enchanted, I admit," answered Gorham.

After the play they walked about the village, among the houses where the little inhabitants sat upon their piazzas and sang, or talked, or rested silently.

"I shall never see such a reposeful place again," said Gorham, when at last they passed out beneath the bamboo arch into the turbulent street. "I should like to prolong that experience indefinitely."

"You can repeat it," suggested Clover.

"I should like to believe that; but one seldom has so much enjoyment in the same space of time as I have had this evening. I feel grateful to you for showing me all that."

They passed down the remainder of the Midway and under the last viaduct. Walking north around the end of the Woman's Building, they stood a moment arm-in-arm by the lagoon, and watched the quiet boats glide by, then slowly began the homeward walk.

"You did not tell me," said Page, "what you knew Jack would do in our supposed case."

"Have n't we finished yet with the sins of smokers?"

"I don't know. Perhaps we have. Were you going to say that you believed Jack would give up the habit at the request of the woman he loved?"

"I was going to say that he would promise to. Yes, I am quite sure what Jack would do, for I have known men of his kind to do the same thing. His fiancée — I, for example" —

"No, say your sister; although he is not at all her kind."

"Why, what is the matter with poor Jack, Mr. Page?" asked Clover rather resentfully. "In what category do you place him, pray?"

"I place him high enough," returned Gorham hastily. "I only refer to a woman's fancy, and I have an idea that Miss Bryant would prefer a more sober, studious man."

"Why, I can't imagine what makes you think that!"

"It does n't matter," said Page. "It can't hurt her at all for us to engage her to him for a few minutes. You are not going to say that Jack

would make a promise and break it? If you think that, you rate him lower than I do."

"He would n't mean to. This is about the way it goes, or the way I have known it to go. Supposing Mildred to be engaged to Jack, she might tell him she wished he did not smoke; that she disapproved it for many reasons. He would probably reply that he hoped she would not ask him to give it up, for if she insisted of course he should comply with her wishes. This would make such an appeal to her tenderness that she would forbear objecting awhile, feeling sure, poor thing, that her lover was completely in her power; but after a time, inclination and conviction both urging her, she would return to the subject. She might say, for instance, that she could not help wishing strongly that he would give up this habit, and that Clover had said no man would do it for any woman. At this Jack would flare up. How could Clover be guilty of such a speech! She had evidently never known any man who loved a woman as he, Jack, adored her, Mildred. He would die for her. It would be a pleasure to him to give up this comparatively slight gratification for the sake of proving his affection for his beloved. Great elation on the part of Mildred. Lying low on the part of Clover. Jack stops smoking, and is ostentatiously careless and cheerful. Mildred flatters him gratefully. He assures her that he does not care if he never sees a cigar again, and is glad if such a trifling sacrifice pleases her.

"Some day, perhaps before their marriage, perhaps after, it depends upon the length of the engagement, Jack, after dinner, lights a cigar with a friend. Mildred protests gently. He answers reproachfully. Of course she knows the habit is entirely broken up, she surely is not going to be puritanical and unreasonable because once in a way he lights a cigar as she would eat confectionery? She still feels uneasy, but is rather ashamed to show it. He puts his arm around her, tells her she is a nice little girl, and came just in time to save him from smoking to excess, and he thanks her for it."

"Well?" said Gorham, as she paused.

"Well, that occasional cigar soon becomes a daily one, or one of a daily half-dozen."

"Mrs. Van Tassel! How cynical you are!"

Clover laughed. "Oh no, not cynical. Jack was honest in his expectation to give up his pet indulgence. He reasoned himself into thinking his course was right."

"I can't believe it is always so."

"Always, Mr. Page," returned Clover, nodding wisely. "Men have died and worms have eaten them, but not for love. Men have given up tobacco and endured the torment it entails, but *not —for— love!*"

"I never wished before that I was a smoker," said Page musingly, "but I suppose it would be rather foolish to cultivate the appetite merely to deny it."

"A piece of braggadocio which would be sure to reap the reward of failure," replied Clover.

"Don't say that, or you will tempt me to experiment. My first cigar made me dreadfully ill when I was twelve years old, and my father counter-irritated my internal misery with an outward application; so I did n't try it again for some time. In the past year I have occasionally yielded to Jack's urgency and smoked a cigar, but it does n't interest me. I forget about it, and it goes out."

"By all means let well enough alone," laughed Clover.

"Do you object to the use of tobacco?" asked Page earnestly.

"In you I should," answered the other, her eyes shining in the darkness.

"I wish I could give it up," he replied simply.

CHAPTER XXII.

ON THE LAGOON.

MILDRED and Jack, when they discovered that they had lost their companions, made no effort to find them.

"It is a great bore for more than two to try to keep together in this place. Don't you think so?" asked Van Tassel.

"It is very difficult, certainly," agreed the girl. "Is n't it strange to look about this wonder-world of a street and realize that it is just the Midway Plaisance? Recall the old driveway at this hour."

"Yes; early evening was its most populous time too; but even then, how quiet it was. What a wild idea it would have been to expect to see Turkish dancing-girls, half-naked Dahomeyans, and all the rest, living in those still, green fields. Have you been in to Hagenbeck's and seen the marvelous trained animals?"

"Yes; but it is a rather creepy pleasure to watch lions, tigers, bears, and leopards walking around that one solitary man and hissing threateningly at him even while they obey."

"The one moment when I found my breath short was when the trainer made five lions lie down on the ground, and threw himself on his back upon

them as though on a rug. He flung his arms out and caressed their great noses. I tell you, I did n't like him to let those beasts out from under his eyes."

"That was thrilling, I remember; but I felt for the lions sometimes, too. I did n't like to see them demean themselves. When one had to hold the end of a rope in his teeth and swing it to let a hound jump, it seemed rather small business to demand of the king of the forest."

When the two friends, stopping often by the way to watch some curious object of interest, reached the Japanese bazaar, they went in for a few minutes. By the time they emerged, the twilight had wholly faded.

"See your kings of the forest!" exclaimed Jack.

Mildred looked across the street. There in mid-air, apparently suspended like Mahomet's coffin, the iron cage above the entrance to the Hagenbeck arena was brilliant with electric light. Five great lions were within, and the strange effect, in the surrounding darkness, was heightened when the trainer, whip in hand, entered and closed the door behind him. In a shorter time than it takes to tell it, Jack and Mildred found themselves in the centre of an ever-growing crowd, all with upturned faces watching the wondrous apparition. The magnificent beasts glided lithely back and forth, watching the trainer, who, exciting them more and more by the whip which he cracked in the air, adroitly avoided being knocked down as they bounded

about him, passing and repassing one another with increasing swiftness.

"A great advertisement," remarked Jack; then, as Mildred moved and turned her head, "Are you being uncomfortably crowded?" he asked.

"Never mind, it is worth it!" she said, rather breathlessly, as a big fellow, uncouth in his open-mouthed wonder, unconsciously shoved her against her companion.

Van Tassel drew her in front of him and placed his arm between her and the countryman. The latter still pressed, but feeling an obstruction firm as a bar of iron, turned his admiring countenance vaguely around toward Van Tassel.

"Well, I vum," he exclaimed. "Ever seen anything like that before? Wife and I never did. Them lions hangin' betwixt earth and heaven shakin' their manes at that feller, and he dodgin' around out o' their way as cool as a cucumber! It 's wife's aim to tell the truth when we get home, and it 's mine, too. It 's both our aims; but we might 's well lie. There won't anybody believe this."

"It is amazing," said Jack; "but you can see as well in one place as another. Would you kindly push the other way?"

"They 're a-hunchin' us on this side too," explained the man; then continued to gape, oblivious of his surroundings.

The trainer placed a white and gold chair in the centre of the cage, and made one of the lions spring into it. The creature placed its powerful

forepaws on the chair-back, and waved its graceful tail from side to side. Another of the beasts reared on its hind legs high above the trainer's head, resting its paws against the iron bars; and its roar resounded through the crowded street.

The trainer motioned the sitting lion from the chair, shot a revolver twice into the air, left the cage, and lo! the wondering spectators were gazing into blank darkness.

"Another dream over," said Jack into the ear so close to him.

The tightly hemmed-in mass of humanity slowly dissolved into its integral parts.

"They ought to have a packed house after that," remarked Mildred.

"Shall we swell the number?"

"Not unless you wish it."

"I don't. I wish something else very much. Will you answer as meekly and civilly when I ask it?"

They had begun again their walk eastward.

"I don't know."

"Oh, that is not encouraging."

"It is wise, though. I was brought up never to be afraid to confess that I did n't know a thing."

"I want you to go with me in a gondola. Compare my humility with Robert Page's *sang-froid*."

"A gondola will be even more difficult to catch by this time than a horse-car," suggested the girl.

Jack looked at her, but her piquant smiling face taught him renewed patience.

"Then you will not run much risk in promising," he answered. "Shall we leave it to Fate to decide? If we find a gondola easily, will you go?"

"Yes, indeed."

As they left the Plaisance and came around the Woman's Building, a sun-burst of fire in the east illuminated the sky.

"A salute to royalty," said Jack. "Queen Mildred has arrived."

The white light faded, to be followed by dazzling green, ruby, and gold, as one bomb followed another, to burst above the lake and cast abroad in the heavens fountains of jewels that rained down in glittering showers.

"Now, let us see if Fate is good-natured," said Van Tassel, leading his companion toward the nearest gondola-landing. A graceful willow hung above and obscured it.

"I must laugh at you, Jack," said the girl, suiting the action to the word. "The idea of expecting to find a gondola now, way over here."

"Stranger things have happened. Suppose," suddenly standing still and looking down into her eyes, — "suppose you should say that you wish it. Just for luck, you know."

"I never wish for impossibilities."

"Do you expect me to believe that?"

"Well, I try not to."

"But wish for this. You know it is possible to have strawberries in January."

"What a great boy you are still, Jack. Very

well, I wish that two gondoliers may have been attacked by an unusual access of laziness this evening, have denied their craft to all applicants, and skulked over here away from the crowd, and that they may be waiting for us now in the shadow of the willow. Any more midsummer madness you would like me to indulge in?"

Van Tassel led her down the bank. "Behold!" he said. "Mildred, what a witch you are! This is necromancy."

The girl stood with lips parted, for the waiting gondoliers sent their graceful craft to her feet. She put her hand in Jack's and stepped within. In a moment Van Tassel was beside her, and they had glided away.

The lagoon rippled in a light breeze. Along the edge of Wooded Island the sedges dipped in the waves. Here and there on the bank a group of water-birds showed white, as a neighboring electric light touched the soft plumage beneath which their heads nestled.

Jack wanted his companion to speak first, but she kept silence long.

"Is the sorceress enjoying herself?" he asked gently, at last.

Mildred returned his gaze as she leaned back in her cushioned corner.

"I am a philosopher," she answered. "I am being kidnapped, but I might as well enjoy it."

"Well, that is pretty good. I should say" —

"I don't want to hear anything you have to say.

I am convinced that you are the most designing creature alive. Ask your minions to sing, please."

Jack longed that he might know the thoughts that flitted white-winged through his companion's mind as their boat glided on, to the gondoliers' song.

This ceased as they entered the Court of Honor, grown dusk now in preparation for the second playing of the electric fountains. Half the weary sightseers had gone home; no black crowd lined the railings around the Grand Basin.

The rainbow jets sprang triumphant skyward. An invisible orchestra lent their colors richer meaning and beauty.

"Do you remember the song that Clover sang last night?" asked Jack, leaning a little toward his companion. "It suddenly came to my mind then as the water shot up. Those lines, —

> 'I share the skylark's transport fine,
> I know the fountain's wayward yearning,
> I love — and the world is mine!'

Clover says that is a man's song. I don't agree with her. A woman may be angel enough to feel divine fullness of content simply in loving; but a man who loves must be loved again, or else feel that nothing is his, — nothing; there is no beggar so poor as he. Isn't it so?"

The earnest tone thrilled close to Mildred's cheek. She caught her breath quickly. "I — I don't know," she said, nervously surprised.

"Still true to your bringing up," remarked her companion, controlling himself with a strong will

as he felt her shrink, and leaning back with a short laugh. "Not afraid to say you don't know, when such is the case. Well, I can only speak for myself. When I love and am loved I will agree with the poet, — I would even sing with her if I could:

> 'For soft the hours repeat one story,
> Sings the sea one strain divine,
> My clouds arise, all flushed with glory,
> I love — and the world is mine!'"

Mildred was startled. What a lover Jack would make! He was not Clover's. She was sure of it now, but the thought brought no elation, rather a new, timid humility, which made her seem strange to herself.

She felt her companion's dark eyes upon her, and her usually ready tongue was mute.

Van Tassel did not know whether to gather courage or alarm from her silence as they sat there side by side. The gondoliers slowly propelled the boat, keeping in view of the fountains' tossing banners of liquid light.

"Tell me what you are thinking, Mildred," he urged, at last.

"I am not thinking. Do you ever come to such times? I do always in this spot. Perhaps it is because I have no thoughts to match such unearthly beauty. At all events I never think, here. I feel. I absorb."

"Yes, that is it," answered Jack simply.

"Give me the Peristyle," said Mildred, "and what I can see from it, and sweep all the rest of the Fair

away if you like. I don't love many things in this world beside Mildred Bryant, but the Peristyle is one of them."

It was a novel speech from her, and in a novel tone. The low cadence of her voice had lost the laughter or imperiousness which usually characterized it.

Jack was silent for a time. "Are you warm enough?" he asked at last.

"Yes; but I think we had better go home."

"Are n't you comfortable?"

"Oh, certainly, and it was very kind of you, Jack, to take so much trouble."

This gentleness alarmed Van Tassel more than any amount of coldness or impertinence would have done; but he fought off dejection.

"I have given you one thing, then, that you can't hand on to Clover," he said lightly.

The fountains leaped a last time and fell, dropping lower and lower, till only the white sea foaming about Columbia's barge was left. Soft radiance again lit up water and sculpture.

Mildred longed to be at home; and soon she and Jack entered a wagonette at the Park gate and were driven to the house. When they arrived, the orchestra at the hotel was playing the music of Carmen.

"There is a delicate compliment to you, Jack," she suggested, as they ascended the steps.

"Yes; but must you go right in?" for she showed symptoms of leaving him.

"It has been a long day," she answered, lingering with an unusual gentle compliance from which he gathered no hope.

"You are tired," he said, with tender contrition. "I have had you so long, and yet — when should I be ready to let you go! Oh, Mildred, — is it any use?" he burst forth suddenly, in a low tone, seizing both her hands and holding them with painful tightness.

A fluttering and wild, loud peeping came from the tangle of vines near which they stood, and a small dark object half fell, half flew down past their heads to the grass below.

Mildred started. "It is Electra, — a falling star." She laughed nervously. "I am glad she fell, else I might be crying now instead of laughing. It would be such a serious unhappiness to me if I should cause you pain, Jack," she added brokenly. "You are so different from anybody else."

"I am answered," he said briefly and steadily; but he did not loosen her hands. "I am going to ask a great deal of you now, Mildred. Can you forget what I have said?"

"I — I am afraid not."

"Please try to; I will help you."

"Help me?" repeated the girl, bewildered.

"Yes, for everything between us shall be the same as before. To-morrow morning you will say to yourself that you had a dream. That is all."

"Very well." The girl regarded him questioningly. "I hope you are not — are not thinking that I might — might speak of it?"

Jack threw his head back and gave an excited laugh before suddenly growing grave and gazing ardently into her eyes.

"Speak of it? What would it be to me, my darling, if every one knew," he said with swift ardor. "I love — but the world is not mine. That is the whole story, and the only peace for you is to forget it."

Her head drooped under his look.

"I am dreadfully tired, Jack," she said faintly.

"Yes, dear, go, and forgive me." He kissed her hands passionately and released them. She passed into the house, her head and heart pulsing. Bewilderment was her chief sensation. The finality with which Jack seemed to accept defeat was so at variance with his manner.

She stole upstairs silently to her room, closed the door, and turned up the light. Then she went to her mirror and questioned her own pale face with wistful eyes.

"I have n't expected it. I did n't know it was coming this time," she said, answering some thought. "Is Jack really so unselfish as that? Can he care for me enough to — and then cover his disappointment with gayety to save me pain?"

His loving words rang in her ears, her hands still felt the wild pressure of his, and the warmth of his kisses. No one had ever received failure so before. No man had ever dared to call her "darling." A look that was almost fear came into the eyes that gazed back from the mirror. How had

Jack contrived to make himself seem victor instead of vanquished?

He had not even pressed his suit; he had not begged her to try to love him. How nobly he had spared her, — but how audaciously he had treated her!

The color was flowing back to her cheeks. Mildred could no longer study that face in the glass. She turned away, weary, perplexed, troubled by the restless beating of her heart.

"I will get to sleep as quickly as possible. He told me to believe it a dream. I must try to take it all as Clover would."

The thought of her sister was like calling up the image of a saint. She had not been the object of Jack's adoration, after all. How strange, strange! How much better it would have been for him. Not that Clover would have married him, but it would have been good for him merely to love her. Fevers, perplexities, could not come where Clover was; and with this thought came a great longing to breathe Clover's cool, wholesome atmosphere. Mildred slipped into a wrapper, and without pausing to think further, crossed to her door. There was but a dim light within.

She spoke her sister's name very softly, not to wake her if possibly she might be asleep; but Clover herself in an instant opened the door.

"I thought I heard you come in, Milly."

"Why, what are you doing here, all dressed, in the dark?" asked the younger, entering.

"Thinking." Clover laughed. "It sounds amusing, does n't it; but the music was pleasant and my window especially enticing. I felt rather tired when I reached home a little while before you, and meant to be asleep by this time, but here I am, you see."

"Let me come and think too," said Mildred; "or rather, let me come where I can't think."

The two sisters sat down in the large bay window overlooking the lake.

"Have n't you had a pleasant day?" asked Clover.

"I 've had all sorts of a day. How has yours been?"

"Delightful."

"You are my despair, Clover. Things are always delightful to you."

Clover heard the depression in her sister's voice, and wondered; her thoughts flew to Jack too, and she questioned what mood the day might have left him in. "Oh no," she answered, "but those nut-brown maids in the Javanese theatre would put any one into good humor. When they dance, you can no more help laughing than if you were being tickled with a feather. Such dear, cunning, absurd motions as they make, their little bits of mouths looking so serious all the time."

"You take such an interest in everything," said Mildred wistfully. "It is because you have 'a heart at leisure from itself.' I have never longed for that sort of a heart as I have to-day. For

quite a while it has been slowly dawning upon me that I am more self-centred than most people, but to-day Gorham Page gave me the final blow."

"Mr. Page? Why, you astonish me. He has a high opinion of you. He was saying to-day how much deeper and more earnest you were" —

"For mercy's sake," exclaimed Mildred, flushing to her ears, "don't tell me what he said!"

"Why? Are you too conscientious to accept a compliment when you have n't a 'trade'?"

"I have plenty of 'trades.' Jack never talks about you without using superlatives."

"Dear Jack. He is far too appreciative," returned Clover, wishing it were light enough to see how her sister accepted this; "but you have n't told me how Mr. Page hurt you."

"No, it was the truth that hurt me."

"Mr. Page is a very good representative of that," smiled Clover.

"We were coming out of Old Vienna, and you and Jack fell behind to speak to one another, and I addressed Mr. Page. He looked at me vaguely, and answered at random. Well, it was the way that trifle affected me that made me see Mildred Bryant as I had never seen her before. I was deeply offended, yes, angry, that the important favor of a remark from my lips should be disregarded. Oh, Clover, the disgrace of it!"

The speaker's voice was unsteady, and she suddenly covered her face with her hands.

Clover leaned forward and put a hand on her knee.

"Is n't it beautiful," she said earnestly, "to find yourself shrinking from sin? It is so safe to condemn it in ourselves. Hatred of evil is only treacherous when we feel it for the mistakes of others."

"The worst of it was that I knew I should have felt less injured had it not been that another woman was what was preoccupying his attention. He was thinking of you, and I resented it. I could n't live if I did n't tell you. It proved to me that I was growing into a regular — oh, a regular octopus. Everything must be absorbed to feed my vanity, and especially every man."

"Why, Mildred, I am so glad for you," said Clover simply, her cool tones falling on the other's scornful heat and extinguishing its fire. "We have to come to these places, you know, for we must n't be left in our badness, and a little light is let in at a time as we can bear it."

"But I can't bear it," exclaimed Mildred wildly, "for it is second nature to me to be vain and exacting."

"You won't indulge it now."

"Yes, I shall."

"Not so carelessly as before. All this is what comes into the battle of life. One part of our dual nature loves our evils and the other hates them. You can have God's help if you ask it, you know, and you will find how little and how deceptive the progress will be that you make without Him."

"Your battle seems won, Clover."

"I am in one of the peaceful places now, and I am very happy and grateful. I was n't given your tempestuous nature, dear, so our experiences always are and will be different. The Father in mercy lets us develop as irresponsibly as the plants until we get such a glimpse into our souls as you had to-day; but then responsibility begins. It is sinning against light that warps and distorts us."

"I wonder if it would be good for me to be married," said Mildred musingly. "When girls are married, they have n't much time to think about themselves."

"It is good for every girl to marry when she truly loves a man who is unexceptionable," returned Clover, smiling at her own triteness. "But you remember the girl must ask herself, not Can I live with this man? but Can I live without him? "

"Then I should certainly never marry. You did n't do that, Clover."

Clover looked musingly out at the window. "No; I did n't do that. I often think of that little ignorant girl who married dear Mr. Van Tassel. I don't know whether I did right or not; but at the time I thought I did, and that is all I have any concern with; but I was not in freedom. You are in freedom. The Can I live without him? ought to mean Can we be more useful together than we could apart? "

"Why, you don't leave a girl any comfort in thinking about herself at all," complained Mildred, half in tears.

"There isn't much comfort in it, that is a fact," returned Clover, smiling. "You are tired, dear; go to bed now."

They rose, and Mildred took the smaller woman in her arms and their cheeks clung together. "I am unhappy, Clover," she said, with plaintive surprise at the fact.

"It is so restful," replied the other, "to think you have all eternity before you. Even if we only make a beginning here, it will be all right."

"I like your arms around me," said Mildred. "Let me sleep with you to-night."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE HOTEL DANCE.

It was Gorham Page's habit to drop in at the Van Tassel house before making his nearly daily visit to the Fair.

One morning, as he ascended the steps, his sister met him. "I hoped you would come," she said. "I want to be condoled with. Robert's foot has descended. We are going home."

"Oh, I am sorry," replied Gorham, taking the chair she offered him; "but can't some arrangement be made?"

"No. Robert has said 'positively;' and when he says 'positively,' I never waste any more nervous force. Poor, dear boy, he wants to stay as badly as I do, but we have been here longer than we expected already, and after all I would rather go back than to give up the apartment and go to the poorhouse, which he says is the alternative."

"I must go to Boston before long," said Page. "Would n't you like to stay and go back with me?"

"Let Robert go home alone?"

"Yes."

"No, I thank you," with a firm shake of the

head. "I should n't care for the Fair without Robert."

"That is nice," remarked Gorham, regarding her attentively. "I think I should like my wife to feel like that."

Hilda laughed. "Oh, that vague and shadowy wife of yours! Once I believed in her. Too bad that such a good-natured match-maker as I would have been should be burdened with such an impossible brother as you. I have lost all my interest in you, and have transferred it to Jack."

Gorham smiled pensively, and struck the palm of one of his hands with the knuckles of the other. "You think yourself very clever about Jack, don't you?"

"It goes without saying that I am clever, of course, but this occasion does not demand much insight. If they were a trifle more secret in their chats in corners and their exchange of masonic signals, I should think, perhaps, I was a treacherous guest to mention them; but they enjoy their little comedy, and are perfectly willing others should. I think it is unkind in them not to come out openly and allow me to give them my blessing before I go."

"I must say, Hilda, I don't enjoy hearing you use that tone about Mrs. Van Tassel."

"What is the matter with my tone?" asked Hilda.

"It is light," answered Page, with grave simplicity.

His sister stared a moment, then burst into laughter. "What crotchet have you taken now?" she asked. "Does n't the match please you?"

"It is not a match. You are laboring under a false idea. If Mrs. Van Tassel should ever distinguish a man in the way you are speaking of, it will come to our knowledge in a different manner from the one you describe. We are talking in low tones in a corner now; but we are not sentimentally interested in one another."

"An unanswerable argument," said Hilda good-naturedly. "You need n't take the matter *au grand sérieux*. I am profoundly grateful to Mrs. Van Tassel, and think her one of the most charming women I ever knew."

Page's countenance, which had been grave to sternness, relaxed until, slowly smiling, he looked into his companion's eyes and beamed mutely upon her.

Hilda noted the change with private astonishment, and determined to experiment.

"She is so refined," she added after a pause.

"The perfection of refinement," said Page.

"And very graceful."

Gorham nodded. "It is a pleasure to see her move, is it not?"

"She has plenty of spirit too, and wit."

"Yes, indeed. In whatever company she is, she makes her mark."

"And it is never a black and blue one either," responded Hilda, passing her handkerchief over

her lips as she returned the rapt gaze of the earnest face drinking in her words. "There is so much in that. Her wit could never hurt. Her uniform, considerate kindness is her most prominent trait."

"Yes," responded Page, faithfully antiphonal. "Only a pure, true heart like hers could prompt such behavior."

"There is a subtle charm and stimulus in her society."

"And a restfulness, a satisfaction. It is hard to word it, but you have felt it; you recognize it. One can only say, it is good to be in her presence."

Hilda pushed back her chair so suddenly that her companion started. "Gorham Page," she said, gazing at him with sparkling eyes, and rising, "don't you see what has happened?"

"No," he answered, removing his fixed gaze and pushing aside the vines, the better to peer about.

"Not out there!" exclaimed his sister.

"Oh," he answered mildly. "I thought perhaps Blitzen had killed Electra."

Mrs. Page burst into laughter. Peal after peal broke from her, and she clasped her hand to her side.

Robert appeared on the scene.

"It is time you arrived," said Gorham, vaguely smiling. "I have n't the least idea what ails Hilda."

Mrs. Page dropped her head on her husband's shoulder.

"Gorham thought — thought that — that perhaps Blitzen — had killed Electra," she gasped.

"How intensely amusing," remarked Robert. "This girl is tired to death, Gorham," he went on, patting his wife's convulsed shoulder. "She thinks she does n't want to go home, but I know it is time. Mrs. Van Tassel urges our remaining. What a spirit of sunshine she is! If ever there was an angel in a house, she is one."

Hilda lifted her head, to look at Gorham's face. She found it beaming upon his brother with tender delight, and falling back she relapsed into another spasm of laughter.

"Stop this, stop this," said her husband, giving her a little shake.

"I am really afraid Hilda is n't well," said Gorham with concern. "I am sorry if she is too tired, for I wanted to see if you all would n't like to come over to the dance at the hotel to-night."

"That is sensible, profoundly sensible," remarked his brother. "What could finish off a day at the Fair more appropriately than a dancing party!"

"You 've got to go, Robert," said Hilda, wiping her eyes. "It will be lovely. We will smoke on the piazza, and watch the others through the windows."

"Yes, I know how you enjoy looking on at a dancing party."

"Yes, thank you, Gorham, we will come," continued Mrs. Page relentlessly. "I shall just go down to the Court of Honor for one last look,"

she added, sighing. "I will go up in that little balcony at the corner of the Electrical Building, and gaze once more down the stately, spacious square. I shall see the peacock-blue lake through the columns of the Peristyle, look up into the Italian sky roofing all, and say my prayers or sing the doxology; then I shall come home and pack. Oh, Robert, how can we leave it all!"

That evening Jack entered the parlor and found Clover leaning back in an armchair. He dropped into a seat beside her.

"You look fitter to adorn some marble shrine in the White City than to decorate a humdrum, mortal home," he remarked, regarding her thin gown approvingly.

"I believe I never saw you before in a dress-suit," she answered lazily. "You look very neat, my dear. That is what mother used to say to us to suppress our vanity, when we were in festive array. It is rather amusing to see Fair pilgrims in evening dress, is n't it?"

"Where is Mildred?" asked Van Tassel, looking about.

"She will be here directly. If my sister were entirely costumed at any appointed time, I should be anxious about her."

"I have n't had a chance to confess before," went on Jack, low and hastily. "I spoke to her too soon, after all. I need a keeper."

"Oh, Jack! I 'm sorry."

Clover looked dismayed, and her tone was heartfelt.

"The milk is spilled, though; there is no going back. Did n't she tell you?"

"No, indeed. When did it happen?"

"The night we took the gondola ride."

"Days since, then. You are a wonder, Jack. Are you going to stay here and live it down?"

"I am going to stay here if you will let me."

"Let you? It is your home. Oh Jack, I am afraid of your tone. You have n't given up. I must tell you, though, that Mildred would be honest, uncompromisingly honest, in a serious matter like that. She is not a coquette."

"I know it."

"If she does n't love you, you do not want her."

"I don't know whether she loves me or not, and I don't believe she knows any better."

As his handsome, frank eyes looked up at her, Clover's heart swelled with the approval and admiration she felt.

"We must relax to it," she said involuntarily.

"Or brace up to it," he replied, with his brilliant smile; "but it is too late now for the Petruchio act, Clover. I have literally and figuratively given myself away."

"Yes," said the other simply; "what you have to do now is to leave her in freedom. The Lord loves you both alike. If He does not give you Mildred, it will be because that marriage would stand in the way of your real advancement."

"Do you really believe that?" Van Tassel regarded her in curiosity and surprise.

"Why, Jack, think it out some time. How can it be any other way?" she answered, speaking hastily, for she heard a rustle on the stairs; and a moment after her voice ceased, Mildred came into the room.

She was dressed in a pale violet gown, which revealed her superb neck, and she pulled long gloves up over her bare arms as she came.

Jack sprang to his feet. How could she help liking the homage in his eyes?

"I know I have n't kept you waiting," she said brightly, "for Mrs. Page's light is still burning, and of course it will take her some little time to wake up Mr. Page."

Hilda's feet, in their little black satin slippers, came flying down the stairs as she spoke.

"Is Robert in a hammock?" she exclaimed apprehensively. "I meant to stick them both full of pins, but I have n't had time. That poor dear man has done a lot to-day, in spite of all my warnings. I expect he will sleep from here to Boston, when we get started. You two girls look perfectly lovely. I shall wake him up with that information."

As they were all finally setting out, Gorham Page came up the walk.

"I thought I would wander down and make sure of you," he said to Clover, as he turned back beside her.

"You were sure of us," she returned. "I have not danced for five years. It seems to me I

should never have thought of it again but for your invitation."

"You do not care for the amusement, then?"

"Clover Bryant used to care greatly," she said, smiling; "but perhaps Mrs. Van Tassel has forgotten how to dance."

They found the long, spacious piazza of the hotel gay with promenaders.

Robert Page groaned. "How marvelous is the endurance of man and woman kind," he remarked. "How many of these people do you suppose have been doing the Fair to-day?"

"You must n't talk about the Fair," returned his wife. "It is fortunate for you that the diversion came up, else I should have spent this evening weeping because I have said good-by."

"Have you come over here with the notion that I am going to dance?" asked Page mildly.

"No, I have n't the least idea you will. I would n't ask it, since you were foolish enough to tramp miles to-day."

"How could I help that, my dear, with the awful 'last chance' sensation hanging over me?"

The orchestra in the hotel parlor began to play. Jack Van Tassel came up to where the husband and wife were sitting.

"Are you going to dance, Hilda?"

"Apparently not," she answered gayly.

"Give me this, won't you?"

"Oh, you don't need to. Why, where are Mildred and Clover?"

"They are sitting over yonder. They have many friends here. It seems to me this is rather a peculiar way for you to treat my invitation."

"No, Jack," said Page, with a heart-rending sigh. "The old man will have to dance once. 'Let it be soon,' as the song says. Come, my love, weary and footsore, let us tread the dreamy maze together."

"Robert really wants to dance," said Hilda to Van Tassel confidentially. "The music inspires him. I have n't the heart to refuse. Thank you. Perhaps later we can have a turn."

"Now, was n't that sweet of Jack and exactly like him?" asked Hilda, when they had drifted in among the floating couples. "He was afraid you were going to be immovable; and the very first dance, when of course you would suppose he would ask Mildred" —

"Or Mrs. Van Tassel, according to your theories."

"My dear, I am shaken on my theories. I may have been wrong. I hope I have been. What do *you* think, Robert?"

"I can't tell any of my thoughts while I am dancing, Hilda. Don't ask it. If you do, I shall probably step on your foot. I have the greatest sympathy with the man who, when his partner insisted on talking to him in a round dance, replied as follows: Yes, two, three; one, no, three; one, two, yes; and so forth."

"What a goose you are, dear; but you dance

as well as you ever did, if you have forgotten how to say sweet nothings during a waltz."

"Pray remember how much more breath I used to have. The spirit is willing still, but the flesh is too many for me."

"There go Gorham and Clover," said Mrs. Page with some excitement, pausing in the dance, and taking her husband's willing arm. "Robert, I want you to watch Gorham to-night," she added impressively.

"More mysteries?" returned Page plaintively. "I don't see anything out of the way about him. He is rather stunning in a dress-suit."

"I wonder if Clover thinks so," responded Hilda significantly.

"Oh, you are only marrying him again," remarked her husband, with an air of enlightenment. "If all your plans succeeded, I don't know what would become of Gorham. He could n't even take refuge in Utah, for I understand the Mormons are discouraging plural marriages."

"You can chaff, Robert; but mark my words, some day you will look back to this evening and exclaim over my cleverness. I have n't told you all I know. I have proofs, if I chose to" —

"Yes, my dear, your fate is the common one of those who cry 'Wolf' too often. I've heard your proofs before." Then squeezing his wife's hand against his side, he added, "There is n't another Hilda for poor Gorham, so how can I take a breathless interest in his prospects?"

Mrs. Page was mollified, of course; but she shrugged her shoulder. "I don't understand how you can see those four people together and not weave romances. Now, for instance, I am burning to know why Mildred and Jack are not dancing this first dance together, instead of with Lieutenant Eames and his cousin. I dare say poor Jack lost his chance by coming to take care of me."

But Hilda was wrong. A little circle of friends had gathered about Clover and Mildred as soon as they appeared on the hotel piazza, and Mildred saw at once in Jack's quiet withdrawal that he did not intend to ask any favor for himself. She liked this in theory, but it half-vexed her to find herself alertly cognizant of his every movement even while she chatted and laughed with her other friends. She saw him approach Hilda, and wondered if he were asking her to dance; then, when the latter moved away into the hotel with her husband, Mildred talked volubly to Eames in order to prevent his having an opportunity to offer himself for her partner. These dances were informal. There were no printed programmes. She wished to give Jack time to return to their group and claim her before the lieutenant should.

How exasperatingly deliberate his motions seemed to her, as he sauntered along!

"I can easily believe what you say, Mr. Eames," she said glibly. "The papers print a great many of the amusing blunders that are made, and I am sure they are not exaggerated, by my own experi-

ence. There were two women standing near me in front of the Manufactures Building the other day, and one said to the other: 'Oh, look at that big statute of Liberty; do you suppose it 's solid gold?' 'No!' replied the other scornfully, 'it 's holler. If that was solid gold it would be worth ten thousand dollars.' Then this sophisticated one turned to me. 'Can you tell me where the Court of Honor is? Is it in the Administration Building?' I answered that this was the Court of Honor, and I suppose I gestured generally, for she looked down at the Basin and then at me with a pitying smile. 'Oh no,' she said, 'that is the lagoon.'"

Why *would* Jack stop to look in at the window? How slow he was! "Oh yes, and, Mr. Eames, was there any truth in that story I read about the battle-ship? Somebody says, you know, that although it looks so solid and impressive, an angry man could do it considerable damage with a crowbar, and I read lately about some country people who were visiting it. While they were exploring, the ship's bells rang, and coincidently the whistle of a neighboring tug began to blow. The story said those poor people thought the boat was going to start and rushed for the gang-plank, panic-stricken. One man fell into the water, and a woman broke her ankle. It ought not to be amusing, but it is."

"Ha, ha," responded Eames, "there is a grain of truth in it;" (Jack was drawing near) "the rest is

the reporter's imagination. I can tell you what was the foundation of that yarn." (Jack approached and stood near the speaker.) "Won't you dance this with me, Miss Bryant, and I will initiate you into some of the methods of newspaper men as discovered by the officer-of-the-day at Jackson Park."

They moved away, and Helen Eames, who had audaciously escaped a would-be partner in the hope of this very event, fell to Jack's lot.

She was a vivacious, jolly girl, and a man was not obliged to talk much while with her, so Van Tassel yielded to her determination to detain him at her side as long as was feasible.

Mildred, promenading with her partner on the piazza after the dance, passed them sitting near the water where one could see, down the curve of the lake, the fireworks of the White City bursting in starry brilliance. Far out upon Michigan's breast shone a row of steady lights, beside which, as on a liquid boulevard, the illuminated passenger-boats plied up and down.

Van Tassel was playing with his companion's fan, and laughing as though he were well entertained, at the moment Mildred passed by.

The sight did not please her.

"It is all my monumental vanity," she thought. "I am glad Jack is n't one of the sort of men who stand around in corners and watch one tragically."

She had danced several times when Clover, left near her by Gorham Page while he went to bring her a glass of water, addressed her.

"You have n't danced with Jack once," she said, with hasty reproach.

"Have n't I?" Mildred raised her eyebrows.

"But are n't you going to, dear?"

"Not unless he asks me, darling."

Clover stared, then turned away to smile. She had not often seen Mildred in such an ill-humor.

"Poor, dear, unconscious Petruchio," she reflected. "I wonder if he is building better than he knows."

Here Page returned with the water, and she could say no more, even if she wished. Moreover, Gorham now addressed Mildred, to claim the dance for which the strains of the Washington Post March were already sounding assertively.

Jack had this two-step with Hilda, and when it was over he brought her to a seat near those which Mildred and Gorham had taken on the piazza.

"Mildred," remarked Hilda, "this young man does know how to dance."

Van Tassel bowed until the parting in his hair was visible.

"That is nice," returned Miss Bryant languidly.

"The fireworks are over," continued Hilda. "That awful word 'nevermore' is hanging over everything for me to-night. I meant to be out here to see the last piece, but I was n't, — that superb volcano, or mine, or whatever name they try to describe it by. I want you all to think of me with compassion every time you see it hereafter. Where do you suppose Robert is?"

"Perhaps I ought to know," suggested Gorham. "I will hunt him up if you will allow me, Miss Mildred."

"I 'll go with you," said Mrs. Page. "It is rather cool here to sit still after dancing. You will excuse me, Jack? I think I ought to let poor Robert off now, and take him home."

It was the first time Mildred and Jack had been alone together since the memorable evening.

"May I have the next dance?" asked Van Tassel abruptly.

"If you like," answered the girl carelessly. "Have n't you had enough dancing?"

"I have n't had any," he answered briefly; and Mildred told herself that the demon of her vanity had received what it craved, so warm a sensation of satisfaction stole around her heart.

"I thought I would make myself safe before one of your other friends espied you here; but if you are tired" —

"I am never tired — physically," said the girl, with a slow smile.

"I was only going to say that I would be content to sit out the next with you; although we have not danced together since that night in the boathouse." Jack smiled. "Do you remember what you told me?"

"Oh yes. You made that child very happy. She owes you a dance."

"These surroundings are strange. Have you been thinking of it?"

"Yes. Only last year this ground was a tangle of goldenrod and willow-trees. How many times we have gone bathing on that beach! It was as good a playground for jolly youngsters as could be imagined; and now" —

She paused.

"Now, the music has commenced," suggested Jack, rising. "In consideration of the manner in which I have effaced myself so far, you should allow our dance to begin promptly."

They entered the parlor by the door which leads from the east piazza. She put her hand in his, and they glided away over the polished floor among the pillars with their vine-like wreaths of electric lights.

Amid the scattering groups which, outside, watched the dancers through the windows, was one spectator who was seeing a conventional dancing party for the first time in her life. It had suddenly occurred to Robert Page that it would be worth the exertion of going after Aunt Love to see her view this pretty scene; and when Hilda and Gorham reached the front entrance of the hotel in their search for Robert, they found him ascending the steps with Miss Berry.

"The young ladies did ask me if I did n't want to come over, and I thought I should feel out o' place," she said; "but Mr. Page, he just made me, so here I am."

"Now, come to this window," said Robert, "and tell me what you think of that."

The others clustered around Miss Lovina, as she murmured and exclaimed in her surprise.

"I never approved o' dancin'," she said. "I never saw any before. Mr. Gorham, do you remember that hall in the New York Buildin'? That must be temptin' to young critters when it 's lighted up, and the music 's a-playin'. Why," eagerly, "see Miss Mildred and Mr. Jack. My, don't they go pretty! And there 's Mrs. Van Tassel herself and some feller. Why," turning suddenly upon Gorham, "why ain't you in there dancin' with her?"

"I have danced with her twice," he answered. "I must n't be a monopolist, although it is a temptation. She is by far the best dancer here."

Upon this Hilda pressed her small satin shoe against her husband's foot, and he obtusely moved it out of her way.

"Well, I declare," exclaimed Miss Berry, gazing in ever-warming admiration, "if it ain't enough to make a body want to be young and pretty. To think this is the real, wicked thing itself, and I ain't shocked. What 's the matter with me, Mr. Gorham?"

"Considering your prejudices and traditions, it is a little odd. Perhaps it is because you cannot associate an idea of evil with anything you see Mrs. Van Tassel engaging in."

Here Mrs. Page again endeavored to gain her lord's sympathy, with the result that he ejaculated: "Where *would* you like to have me put my feet, Hilda?"

"Why don't you go in there and dance, Mr. Gorham?" pursued Miss Berry.

"Am I so young and pretty that you want to see me? Well, if Hilda is willing to favor me."

"Oh certainly, so long as Robert does n't care to go home. *Au revoir*, dears."

"Now, then," Aunt Love turned upon her companion argumentatively, "are you perfectly willin' a man should put his arm around your wife's waist?"

"On the contrary, I should object seriously."

"How about that, then?" Miss Berry gestured toward the hall.

"For a man to place his hand on a woman's waist to steady and support her is not to put his arm around her. There are too many other things for a couple to think of in guiding themselves successfully through a crowd of dancers to allow of their usually being conscious of the intimacy of their position. Don't be afraid to admire the dancing, Aunt Love. It can be abused, like everything else; but it is an excellent exercise, inculcating grace, strength, and good manners."

"Well, now, I 'm goin' to tell some folks I know what you say. Ain't your wife just as light as a fairy, and don't your brother look handsome tonight? No, sir, there ain't any folks here as good-lookin' as ours."

When the waltz was finished, Gorham Page and Hilda approached Clover and told her that Aunt Love was without. She excused herself from her

partner to go with them, and soon afterward Gorham walked home with her.

"Thank you so much for coming," he said, when he was bidding her good-night.

"I am sure we have all to thank you," she answered. "Is n't it hard to be reconciled to letting your brother and Hilda go? We have been such a pleasant party."

"Yes," returned Page, looking down at her as she stood in her white wrap, an unconsciously adoring expression in his eyes; "this summer is an experience that one could wish would never end. Going away," he smiled vaguely, "leaving you, having these weeks come to an end, is almost as difficult to grasp in prospect as the thought of death."

Clover laughed softly. "We won't borrow trouble," she said. "Good-night."

CHAPTER XXIV.

DRESS PARADE.

"Do you think Jack enjoyed himself?" asked Clover, when her sister crossed the hall to her room that night for the usual last word before retiring.

"I suppose he did. How anxious you are about Jack all the time! You make an absolute fetish of him. It used to mislead me."

"Did it?" Clover smiled, and turned back to her dressing-table.

"Yes, indeed, and no wonder. It is a good thing, however, that I was mistaken, else I 'm sure there would have been coffee and pistols ordered for two. I want your opinion, Clover, on a delicate question. Supposing a man of some strength of character spends a whole evening at a dance following about after a woman, smiling pensively at her face, or the back of her head, or her shoulder, or whatever of her he can get to smile at, and finding spots of vantage from which he can behold her dance when he is not dancing with her himself. Supposing he flies about to bring her glasses of water, and wraps, and fans, and performs all the other offices which are usually the privilege of her partners, driving said partners to the last pitch of exasperation. What, I ask you, is the matter with that man?"

Clover turned her tender glance upon her sister, marveling that the spirit of mischief could be so rampant in her eyes.

"Dear," she said reproachfully, "that man is very deeply in love."

"That is what I supposed myself," replied Mildred demurely; "but I wanted to be sure I did n't exaggerate."

"Too seriously so for you to make merry over it," continued Clover, shaking her head.

"Well, if you are n't a pair of you!" exclaimed Mildred, bursting into laughter, which she endeavored to repress out of consideration of the lateness of the hour. Then she seized her sister's astonished face between her hands and kissed her repeatedly. "I suppose there is n't another man in the world beside Jack Van Tassel, is there? How glad I am, I am not attached to him; I should be wildly jealous."

"Oh — let me go, Mildred. I did n't know you meant — I did n't know that any one noticed" — Clover was as red as her namesake, and looking everywhere except at her sister.

"Noticed! Why, my dear, he was a perfect spectacle. I fancy everybody in the room noticed except himself. He does n't know what is the matter with him, either. He asked me once, when we were out on the piazza, if there was n't some malaria here. He is n't able to sleep of late, and his appetite is n't right." Mildred went off into a peal of laughter.

"Hush. Do please hush, Milly," implored poor crimson Clover in an agony. "Supposing Hilda should hear you and come in. She will. Oh, *please*."

"He said he thought he should take — oh dear, I'm hurting myself — he thought he should take quinine!" Mildred wiped her eyes; "and I said — I was of the opinion — oh my! that something sweet would help him more; extract of Clover, perhaps."

"Mildred, tell me instantly you did n't say that!"

"Well, not quite so much as that; but he tempted me dreadfully."

"Go to bed, Milly. Go to bed straight off. It is late."

"All right; but is n't it funny?" pleadingly.

"No. I do not think it funny at all."

"Oh, you must; that big, absent man, vainly mooning around among his data" —

"Well, if you will only go away; perhaps — it 's a little — There, I have turned the gas out. You will have to go."

"I am about to set up a Gorham to match your Jack," said Mildred irrepressibly. "I am going to see that you treat the poor man right, and help him diagnose his symptoms. I am going to give you reproachful glances and him tender ones. I shall have to tell him they 're tender, though" — But here Clover succeeded in pushing her over the threshold and closing the door upon her.

The following day Mr. and Mrs. Page took their departure, the latter more reluctant than ever to leave so many objects of interest.

"Ain't it lonely without 'em?" said Aunt Love that night to Clover, after dinner. "I don't know but you 'll want to ask Mr. Gorham over here to help fill up the gap," she suggested rather timidly.

"No, I think we won't disturb his arrangements," replied Clover quietly. "I suppose he can't stay here very much longer any way."

Miss Berry went to the back door to give Blitzen and Electra their supper, and arbitrate between them while they ate it.

"She won't ask him over. H'm!" she soliloquized, arranging two dishes of scraps, while the two pets barked and chirped expectantly. Then she seated herself on a step to watch their proceedings.

"That looks like it," she continued in her own thoughts. "Well, if this is what he 's been waitin' for, thirty odd years, I don't feel to blame him. Now you get back, Electry. Blitzen ain't a-goin' to stand everything. Sometimes it does seem 's if you had the most cheek of any critter in feathers. Well, look at that now!" for Blitzen, exasperated at a raid upon his plate, jumped at the chicken, who quick as thought hopped on his back, and clung to her perch by means of claw and wing while the terrier raced in a mad circle.

Aunt Love's hearty laugh rang out as she watched Blitzen's fruitless efforts to disembarrass

himself. At last he lay down and rolled over, and Electra, squawking excitedly, ran back to her plate.

She was not pursued. The terrier ever afterward regarded her as something uncanny, and so far as possible refrained from acknowledging her existence.

An event of general interest during the Fair summer was the visit to the Exposition of the West Point cadets. Cro' Nest itself is scarcely more immovable from its position among the Highlands of the Hudson than these pets of Uncle Sam; but it is a matter of history that they and their paraphernalia were transferred to the Philadelphia Centennial, and now again with much form and ceremony their camp was set up in the green plain adjoining the Government Building on the shore of Lake Michigan. They arrived one dazzling afternoon, which began serenely calm, but toward evening gave the guests a northeast wind which sent white-capped waves rushing landward, and shook the tents in the new company-streets.

Starting from the Terminal Station, the young soldiers marched through the streets of the White City, preceded by their famous band, and as they proceeded looked neither to the right nor the left at the widely noised marvels surrounding them, but kept eyes front as though still treading their own quiet, elm-lined avenues, while the waiting crowds cheered and cheered again the elegant precision of their movements.

In an hour, gray-coated sentinels were again

walking post in this new Camp Sheridan, alertly conscious of their routine business, and apparently without a thought of the surroundings beyond the camp.

Mildred Bryant felt considerable interest in the cadets, and assumed much more. "Helen Eames says that no matter how good a time a girl may have, she can never have as good a one as if she had spent a summer at West Point," she announced to Van Tassel one day, on the occasion of their being together. She felt that he made these occasions rare, and at times the fact touched her. At others she said to herself, "He is getting over it."

"Then why don't you go there?" asked Jack. "I don't know who has a better right to the flowers of life."

"I did think of getting Clover to take me next summer, but now, wonder of wonders, the mountain has come to Mahomet. Don't you want to go down to parade to-night?"

"Yes; I don't know just how to make you comfortable, though. The mob is something marvelous. I looked over their heads a minute last night, but being in the sixth or seventh row, concluded the game was n't worth the candle."

"Ah, that is where the convenience comes in of having a military friend," returned Mildred gayly. "We shall not need to mingle with the *hoi polloi*. Won't you come too, Clover?" as her sister entered the room.

"Where?"

"To see dress parade this evening."

"Yes, I am going. Mr. Page has already asked me."

"I don't believe you had better try to get along without me. Jack and I are going to meet Mr. Eames on the steps of the Army Hospital at a quarter before six. There is a great crowd."

"Thank you. Perhaps we will be there. Did you hear Aunt Love's comment last night? She said that in the afternoon she ran into an impassable throng near the Administration Plaza, and after vainly trying a long time to get through, she finally found the attraction was only a lot of schoolboys drilling. If those important young heroes could have heard her scornful tone!"

When Clover had left the room, Jack spoke again. "Since you have an appointment with Eames, I withdraw, Mildred. I don't see why you asked me."

"He said I might bring my friends," she replied. "Do come, Jack."

Van Tassel looked straight into her eyes, and smiled with an expression which seemed to the girl both brave and hopeless.

"Won't you?" she persisted.

"Of course," he answered.

In the afternoon, Clover walked to the Park, and entering back of Texas walked down the northern avenue of State buildings. The usual crowd was flocking in and out of Mount Vernon, but she

crossed the street to New Jersey's charming home, and entered. It was entertaining a large number of sightseers, note-book in hand, who jotted down their inventories. Clover wished she might look over the shoulder of one woman, with a harassed but determined countenance, whom she met in the cosy west room downstairs. She wondered how this anxious one would be able to transfer to paper the charm of its quiet comfort, with the breezy foliage waving near its half-closed green blinds and casting shadows on the dainty white curtains.

It was all familiar ground to Clover, so she went upstairs and seated herself in a corner of the deep, luxurious sofa which commanded a view, down through the open gallery, of the front door.

People came, looked, commented, passed into the dainty blue chintz bedroom, emerged smiling, and went away.

Many had appeared, climbing the stairway with various degrees of toil, before the figure she awaited came into view. This one sprang up the steps alertly, with a serious expression, which brightened to pleasure at sight of her.

"Have I kept you waiting?" he asked eagerly. "I came around from the Cliff Dwellers by the Intramural road, and we had a stoppage of several minutes. I have been very anxious."

"I am sorry for that," answered Clover, as Page seated himself beside her. "I thought you knew that I am always content in this house. I should move down here and live, if they would let me. I

have been fancying that I was holding a reception as the visitors came and went. I wonder if any pilgrim to the Fair has a soul so dead as not to covet this house."

"I did n't know you liked it so much," said Gorham, as though the fact were of serious importance. "Perhaps you would enjoy having tea here."

"Tea in the New Jersey Building? What a pleasure! But why do you tantalize me?"

"I think we can. The lady manager from New Jersey is a near relative of mine. Excuse me a minute and I will try the magic of her name."

Page went downstairs, and in five minutes returned.

"The house is mine, practically," he declared, smiling. "I herewith present it to you."

"How delightful! And the tea?"

"Is near by." Gorham went to one of the locked doors on the east side of the hall and knocked. Presently he ushered Clover into this exclusive nook, and the door closed behind them.

It was an appetizing little supper that was shortly set before them on the daintily clothed round table.

"You have gratified one of my pet ambitions," said Clover. "Now I shall always feel a small proprietorship as well as a great affection for this house. I am really breaking bread at its board."

"You spoil your friends by the pleasure you make it to contribute a little to your happiness,"

returned Gorham, his eyes resting upon her with the utmost satisfaction.

"This room is as charming as the rest," remarked Clover, looking about at its ruddy decorations; "and the remoteness one feels from everything confusing, or noisy, or soiling, can only be appreciated by those who do not live in the midst of a large, well-kept park. I amused myself while waiting for you by searching for the fewest words that will describe the faces of Fair visitors. I decided upon 'tired' and 'pleased.' Not 'delighted;' they are too weary for that, — but just 'pleased.'"

Page looked away and considered the idea, as Clover had intended he should.

"Do you know Mildred gives us the opportunity to find good places at parade under Mr. Eames' wing?" she suggested after a minute.

"Oh, I am glad to hear that. I don't quite understand what makes the cadets such a fad. No; one can't call it a fad either, for there is no sudden interest in them, they are always lionized. Since they have been here, I notice that people go hours before the time for parade for the sake of securing good places, and then wait patiently; so I have been wondering this afternoon how I could fix it for you to get a view of the ceremonies. It will be very pleasant to have Mr. Eames' assistance."

"Then comes in that awful word again," laughed Clover. "We shall have to hurry a little."

Page sighed unconsciously. "Is this very good tea?" he asked, as they finally rose from the table. "I am not a connoisseur."

"Very nice indeed."

"I thought it must be. I never enjoyed any tea so much in my life."

"Then we are very much obliged to each other, aren't we?" said Clover gayly, and consulting her watch, she reminded her companion again of the hour of the appointment, and they hastened away.

They arrived at the hospital steps just as the others were leaving.

"Oh, you loiterers," was Mildred's greeting.

"Don't you see our breathless condition?" returned Clover. "How can you have the heart to reproach us? How do you do, Mr. Eames? We are very grateful to you. What a hopeless throng that looks like!"

"Let me take some of those camp chairs," said Gorham, suiting the action to the word.

Mr. Eames led his party towards the officers' tents. They had to force their way through serried ranks of gazers, who were held back with difficulty by the blue-coated sentinels from the camp of "regulars" near by. The sentinel saluted Eames as he passed, and the lieutenant stood still and allowed his friends to file before him to the reserved places before the officers' tents. There they found Helen Eames, who welcomed them radiantly, fixing cordial eyes on Jack in a manner not lost upon Mildred. The latter did not enjoy this effusiveness. She did not wish to marry anybody, but at the same time she did not like to have any other girl try to appropriate her especial friends.

However, her attention was soon momentarily distracted by the novel sights before her, and the usual questions began to flow.

Eames was most willing to answer them. Before long the band marched out upon the plain, and the evening's ceremonies had begun. The cadets, a shining assembly, marched forth from the company-streets and fell into line.

The band, playing The Thunderer, marched up and down the plain before the motionless ranks, and one to whom the West Point forms were familiar asked himself if it must not all be a dream. Here were the same camp, the same cadets, the same band; but where were the mountains, the huge old elms, the river? — instead, the Government Building, the Fisheries, the Battle-Ship, and Lake Michigan.

To Mildred the very sight of the band was not thrilling from all it implied, but she soon found herself absorbed in interest and admiration.

Once she turned around to Jack, who stood behind her.

"I think I must go to West Point, after all."

"Indeed, you must. It is perfectly lovely," exclaimed Miss Eames. "There, you see, that is the adjutant now, advancing to the officer-in-charge;" and she proceeded volubly to explain the tactics which followed.

"I think I shall have to know some cadets," remarked Mildred, turning to Eames.

"That will be very easy; and when you know

one, you will know all. They can talk only on one subject," was the rather stiff reply.

Mildred was perfectly aware that the young lieutenant admired her. She saw that her proposition was displeasing to him; but what she did not know was that he had not yet recovered from that profound fall which results from exchanging the chevrons of a first-class man for the shoulder-straps of a second lieutenant. That young officer must indeed have a seared conscience who can lay his hand on his heart and declare that he entertains only cordial sentiments for a cadet of the first class when their ways chance to cross.

"You refused to attend the cadet ball with me at the New York Building to-night," added Eames reproachfully.

"Why, of course; in my ignorance. Was n't it stupid of me? Oh, what are they running for? Is n't that pretty? Would n't you like to be a cadet again, Mr. Eames?"

"Heaven forbid!" ejaculated that officer devoutly. "I am waked up by reveille yet. Hope I shall get over it some time."

"Mildred is contracting cadet fever, Mr. Van Tassel," declared Helen, looking up at Jack in a way which Miss Bryant noted resentfully, in spite of her preoccupation.

"I never before noticed how objectionable Helen's ways with men are," she thought. "I know Jack wishes she would n't look at him like that."

"I suppose so, Miss Eames," replied Van Tassel. "I am trying to find out what it is that is so fetching about those all-conquering youngsters."

But Jack need not have tried. No male civilian under forty was ever known to discover.

"What is cadet fever?" asked Mildred, "and what is the microbe; a bell-button? I have n't one yet."

The "double-timing" companies had retreated down the streets of camp, and the cheering crowds of spectators quieted. Many of them moved toward the lake shore; for in a short time it had been learned that the cadets would next march to supper preceded by the drum corps; and any ceremony which they performed, no matter how simple, drew a curious throng.

"What is the matter? What are they going to do now?" asked Mildred.

"Going to the Clambake to supper," replied Eames.

"Then I am going to the Clambake to supper," announced Miss Bryant.

"I think you would not enjoy it," said Eames shortly.

"I know I shall," responded Mildred, with her glorious smile.

"I am so sorry I shall have to leave you," remarked Helen. "I have a number of friends among the first class. They were yearlings when I was at the post. I have promised to attend the festivities with one of them to-night. Do come

and see me, Mr. Van Tassel," holding out her hand. "Remember you owe me a game of tennis. I assure you, you would not beat all the time. Are you coming with me, Fred?"

"I believe not, unless you want me. If these people are determined to go to the Clambake, I think I shall have to go too; but remember, you are to save a two-step for me to-night."

"*Au revoir*, then;" and Miss Eames, her last glance for Jack, moved away.

"We won't go with Mildred," said Clover, "for we have had tea recently, and are n't hungry yet. You would never guess where, either. Good-by, Mr. Eames. We are all greatly indebted to you."

"Indeed we are," said Gorham, shaking hands cordially with the lieutenant. "That was a most interesting sight. I congratulate you on being one fit to survive that tremendous training. This is the show side, but I know something of the other."

"Where did you have tea; where?" demanded Mildred, smiling into Gorham's serious face. He instantly smiled back. Those cold, abstracted eyes of Page's had learned a new look recently, as though so much sunshine had warmed his heart that there was an overflow.

"It would make you so discontented with the Clambake, dear," suggested Clover with mischievous deprecation.

"Why, I *will* know."

"The New Jersey house."

"You selfish creatures! Are n't they?" exclaimed Mildred, calling upon Eames and Van Tassel to witness.

"Yes, we are," laughed Gorham, as he and Clover turned away. "We know it."

Mildred, her companions on either side of her, began her walk northward. Eames wished cordially that Jack would remember an engagement. Jack wished sincerely that he knew what Mildred wanted him to do. Unconsciously fulfilling the lieutenant's desire, he spoke: —

"I suppose I really ought to be at home attending to some correspondence I have been putting off, instead of loitering at the Clambake."

Eames answered without giving Mildred time to speak. "I shall be most happy to take Miss Bryant home after her curiosity is satisfied." Van Tassel's jealous ears detected the eagerness in his polite tone.

"But supposing my curiosity is not gratified by the time you are obliged to go and array yourself gorgeously for the evening? No, Jack, I am sorry for you, but Mr. Eames is engaged elsewhere."

"It need not be for some hours yet," protested the lieutenant.

Mildred shook her head firmly. "I could n't think of allowing you to assume the care of me in addition to all your other responsibilities this evening."

"Very well," said Jack. "When it comes to a matter of letter-writing, my conscience never requires very much soothing."

When they reached the Clambake, two cadets were just issuing therefrom. Their hands went up in an instant salute to Eames, who had for the moment preceded his friends.

"I suppose there is a great deal of eating and running being done to-night," remarked Jack.

"But where are they?" asked Mildred aggrievedly, as they entered the busy, noisy eating-room.

"The cadets mess upstairs," returned Eames, with latent satisfaction. "Did you suppose they fell in here with the general company? You don't know much of military discipline, Miss Bryant."

"Never mind; if they are going to run up and down that staircase all the time, as they are doing now, I shall see a great deal of them."

"There is n't much order to-night," remarked the lieutenant. "The cadets own the Fair for the moment, and permits have been issued *ad libitum*."

But supper had scarcely been brought to the three friends when, with a grand clatter on the bare staircase, the remainder of the corps came hurrying down, walked out the door, and quickly forming in ranks marched back to camp.

"Now, does that pay for mingling in this drove of people and getting half-served?" asked Jack, with disdain.

"Fully," exclaimed Miss Bryant, with enthusiasm. "Without those absurd straps around their faces, one can see what beautiful creatures they are."

"Well, I 'm glad," returned Van Tassel shortly.

"I am resigned to your interest in the cadets," said Eames, "if it brings you to West Point, for I am likely to get a detail there next year."

Jack took no part in the animated discussion that followed.

"Don't look bored, Jack," said Mildred at last. "Ask Mr. Eames questions, as I do."

"There is n't any need. You have covered the ground. You are mistaken about my being bored. This is my expression when I am absorbing stimulating information."

"Then he should abstain from stimulants. Don't you think so, Mr. Eames?"

They arose from the table, and going out into the arc-lighted street, walked slowly west.

When they reached Brazil, Mildred declared her desire to go into the building.

"I suppose I ought to leave you," said Eames reluctantly, "but perhaps if you remain in the grounds I may meet you again."

"What is going on?" asked Van Tassel.

"Several things. A procession of illuminated boats in honor of the cadets, a concert by the West Point band outside the Michigan house, illumination of all the State buildings and dancing in many of them, but notably New York, all for the cadets. You will be likely to hear enough of those young men and see enough of them if you remain, Van Tassel."

"Oh, we can't," smiled Mildred demurely, as

she gave her hand to the lieutenant. "We have important letters to write."

The "we," even in jest, was music to Jack. He turned to her as they ascended Brazil's steps. "Well, are you ready to come back to civil life?"

"Have n't I been civil all the time? And you," reproachfully, "were going to leave me."

"Only out of regard to Eames."

"I think you might have more regard for me than for him."

"I have. I thought you knew it."

Mildred did not answer. They had reached the large salon which was the second floor of Brazil's home, and from thence ascended the spiral iron staircase leading to the roof. Mounting another short flight of steps, they entered one of the four towers, and standing between its white pillars looked down on the enchanting vision of early evening in the White City, — the sum of imaginable loveliness.

The imposing façades of its palaces were now pure but not dazzling; the green trees and flowering shrubs of Wooded Island were hung with thousands of fairy lights; the long, bridge-spanned canals wound away into distant mysterious vistas, where tower on tower still rose far as the eye could discern; and, queen above all, stood the flamy curves of the coronet of Administration.

The columns of the Art Palace were mirrored in the lagoon, and near and far upon the water's breast lay little boats, gay with lights, in readiness

for the procession soon to take place; their chains of colored globes faithfully reflected in the depths below.

Distant bells were chiming; from one of the boats the tinkling melody of a mandolin floated up to the watchers in the lofty tower; all else was still, as though the peerless scene were indeed something supernatural, evoked for a moment's breathless rapture, and fated to disappear forever.

Neither Mildred nor her companion spoke for a time.

"Once you gave me your hand when we lived such an experience as this together," said Jack at last, withdrawing his gaze and looking at Mildred in the twilight.

She hesitated, then extended her hand frankly. "So I will again," she answered, with an effort at her old air of good-comradeship. "I am a great believer in handshaking."

Van Tassel only looked at her without accepting the favor, and shook his head slowly. "No," he said, as though to himself, "I cannot be satisfied with it."

Mildred blushed as her hand dropped. "You said," she returned low and swiftly, "that everything should be as it was before."

"Yes, I did, because I was inexperienced. I have never been in love with any one else, and I didn't know how it was going to be. I have become better acquainted with myself since that night and can speak with more intelligence. I find my-

self hoping, even though I say over every day that there cannot be the slightest hope for me, because you know me well, and by this time the truth would be evident to you. If it were in my favor you would tell me, would n't you ? "

The girl gave him one fearful glance, and looked away.

" You would, of course ? " he said, with sudden excitement, seizing the hand he had refused. " Mildred, I love you ! I love you ! I do not say it to you every hour, but I think it with every breath. You would not make me wait one moment if " —

" Oh, how can you, Jack ? Why must you love a girl so unworthy ? " She shrank closer to the railing. " I told you, — I tried to warn you, — I told you that I do not love anybody but Mildred Bryant."

Before she ceased speaking, Van Tassel had released her and recovered himself.

" And the Peristyle," he added steadily, " you are forgetting that."

She did not smile, and her lips quivered.

" So long as my only rivals are your sweet self and the Indians, Helmsmen, *et. al.*, who view the country from the top of the Peristyle, I cannot despair. Perhaps I ought to, dear, but I can't."

Mildred wondered if her companion were really so pale as the shadows made him appear.

" Hope springs eternal in the human breast, and I am going to hope until you announce your en-

gagement to me. Then, until I receive your wedding cards, I shall look to see you find that engagement a mistake. And if you are married," Jack paused; "I don't know. My mind turns blank when it occurs to me that you might marry another man."

"I am not worth it. I am not worth it," repeated the girl.

"Have I made you unhappy? Shall I go away? Will my presence be a burden to you now?"

"No." Mildred looked at him piteously. "I think I have a stone in here instead of a heart," she said, pressing her side, "but stay with me and — and keep the others away. I don't need to tell you how much I like you, Jack. If only it were safe to say what you want me to when I only like you, and value you, and respect you more than any other man" — She paused, unable to proceed.

He turned to her, tender consideration in his tone.

"That is a great deal, Mildred. I must try not to forfeit it."

CHAPTER XXV.

IN THE PERISTYLE.

THE next morning, before seven o'clock, Miss Berry, while busy arranging matters in the dining-room preparatory to breakfast, was summoned by a maid to the back door with the word that a gentleman wished to see her.

To her great surprise, it was Gorham Page who stood waiting on the path.

"Well, well, Mr. Gorham, ain't the days long enough for you?" she asked, smiling, as she came out of the door. "This is new manners for you. Go 'way, Blitzen. Look out, Mr. Gorham, his paws must be wet."

"I did n't want to disturb the house by ringing the bell," explained Page, "and I knew you would be likely to be about by this time. A very unfortunate thing has occurred;" he looked annoyed as he spoke. "I have received a sudden call to St. Louis by a client I cannot neglect, and the business requires that I should spend the whole day in town before I go. Mrs. Van Tassel has promised to go down to the Fair with me this morning on the Whaleback. I want you to explain to her how seriously I regret breaking the engagement. I am really very much put out by the necessity."

Miss Lovina smiled as she broke a twig from the maple under which they were standing. "Ain't you comin' back at all?" she asked.

"Why, certainly I am coming back," replied the other severely.

"Oh," remarked Miss Berry innocently. "I thought perhaps you wanted me to say good-by to 'em for you."

"No, indeed; nothing of that kind. I may be detained a week or ten days, but I wanted Mrs. Van Tassel to understand that no trivial circumstance would deter me from taking the boat trip with her and Miss Bryant as we planned. I would — I would give a great deal not to be obliged to leave."

"Mrs. Van Tassel won't lay it up against you," remarked Miss Berry.

"No, I dare say not," said Page abstractedly. "I must n't wait," he exclaimed, after a moment's reverie. "Tell her, Aunt Love, how sorry I am; put it strong. I thought I would see you instead of leaving a note, for writing is so formal; and oh, by the way, tell her if she forgives me and understands the situation, how glad it would make me to receive a word from her to that effect. This is my address," thrusting a card into Miss Berry's hand.

"What 's the use?" asked Miss Lovina, her shoulders shaking in a laugh. "You know you 're always forgettin' girls. If you should get a letter signed Mrs. Van Tassel, you 'd scratch your head

and say 'Van Tassel? Van Tassel? Where have I heard that name before?'"

"This is no time to joke," he returned hurriedly. "I trust you to deliver my messages faithfully. Don't make light of the matter. Good-by;" and with a hasty bow Page moved briskly away.

Miss Berry looked after his departing figure with some exasperation.

"I hope I do him an injustice," she murmured, "but it 's my opinion he has n't found out yet that he 's lovin' a woman instead o' worshipin' a saint. I don't want to be profane, but I must say I 'm reminded of Ann Getchell's brother. He used to say that he liked a fool, but a darned fool he never could stand."

Clover and Miss Berry sometimes began breakfast before the other and sleepier members of the family appeared on the scene. This was one of the mornings; and while Clover poured the coffee, Aunt Love embraced her opportunity.

"You can't guess who 's been here already," she began.

"No; tell me. Don't make me guess. The day is too new."

"Now you look just fresh and bright enough to guess anything." Miss Berry gazed affectionately at her as she spoke.

"I saw Mr. Page going down the street," said Clover, as she set a steaming cup on the waitress' tray. "Could it have been he?"

"Yes; but you 'd never 'a' guessed him, would you? He come over to get me to tell you that he 's called away on important business, and regrets very much breakin' his engagement with you this mornin' about goin' on the Christopher Columbus."

Clover's transparent skin flushed, but she looked coolly into her informant's eyes. "He does not see us again, then?"

"Law yes, in a few days he does" —

"Lena," said Clover to the maid, "please tell Katie to keep the other things hot for a while. Miss Bryant and Mr. Van Tassel are both a little late. I will ring when I want you."

The moment the door had closed behind the girl, Clover's face changed. "Tell me all about it," she said.

"Ain't it a pity that gump can't see her this minute?" thought Aunt Love. "Even if he 's a darned one, I guess he 'd get a glimmer o' sense."

"Why, he was the most distressed bein' you 'd want to look at," she returned, "just 'cause he could n't stay and go with you on that boat. You 'd think he 'd never seen a sign o' the Fair, — not that he said a word about that, he was all taken up with the disappointment o' not goin' with you." Aunt Love was determined to make the most of Gorham's behest to "put it strong."

Clover's face had quieted, and she was occupied in stirring her coffee.

"I told him I guessed you would n't be overly hard on him, and he told me to ask you, pervided

you did forgive him, to write and tell him so to this address."

Clover looked up quickly as she accepted the card.

"How long will he be gone?"

"A week or ten days, I think he said. Law, if I 've forgotten anything he told me, I shall need the prayers o' the con'regation. Strange," continued Miss Berry slyly, "that I have n't ever seen anything so severe about you that Mr. Gorham should look all beside himself at breakin' a light, triflin' promise to you through no fault o' his."

"I will write in three or four days," said Clover musingly. "That will divide the time." Then she looked up, and met Aunt Love's eyes fixed on her with an expression that made her glance away.

"He 's a none-such," said Miss Berry. "I guess you better let him off easy, Mrs. Van Tassel."

"Oh yes," returned Clover with some confusion. "I will ring for the breakfast now, Aunt Love. We will not wait any longer."

Gorham Page came home to his hotel in St. Louis a few days afterward, tired and enervated by the excessive heat, and requiring to remember all his philosophy not to anathematize the fate which had snatched him from the feast spread upon the shores of Lake Michigan. A little later in the season, during the Congress of Religions, the gentle Dharmapala was riding upon the lagoon one evening, where his snowy silken robes seemed

more in place than the close-fitting black of his companions. Looking about him in the waning light where all was melody, harmony, and beauty, he said : —

" All the joys of heaven are in Chicago."

This sentiment of the lovable Singhalese Page would have echoed, had the anachronism been possible. A sort of chronic yearning and dissatisfaction possessed him, and the heat in St. Louis being a tangible discomfort, he dwelt to himself upon the superior vitality in the air of the lake region, and laid his discomfort at the door of the weather. It was his custom, as soon as he entered the hotel, to inquire for letters ; and to-day he received one in a feminine handwriting.

The clerk noticed the expression of his face as the missive was handed him.

" That fellow can't sing ' The letter I looked for never came,' " was his comment.

Gorham's sensations, as in his room he opened the square envelope with religious care, were of a chaotic nature, which required analysis. He even went so far as to hold the folded sheet a moment and look at the opposite wall with an effort at introspection ; but the insistent desire to possess himself of those written words engulfed all other considerations.

The letter was gentle and friendly like the writer herself. It compassionated him on the fact which Chicago papers reported, of a hot wave in St. Louis ; and described her sight of a great Maharajah,

the nabob then visiting the Fair, who, resplendent in cloth-of-gold robes and pale green turban, passed in state with his suite about the grounds. Jack had surveyed him, and with democratic audacity dubbed His Highness "that chocolate duffer."

The little letter closed with these words: —

"I am alone in the house; even the servants are away. It is rather a desolate sensation; and yet some people profess to feel more keenly the loneliness of being in a crowd of strangers, than that of being entirely by themselves. The former is your sort of loneliness at present. I wonder if you dislike it? I wonder — you always seem so sufficient unto yourself, so much more a man of intellect than of heart — I wonder if you ever feel, as I do more and more strongly every day, our dependence on each other?"

There was nothing more save the conventional ending. Page scarcely glanced at the signature. Something seemed to mount to his head, as his eyes dwelt fascinated upon the last sentence recorded. The sweetness of his instant interpretation of it so possessed and intoxicated him that no other thought could obtain entrance. All the processes of his system seemed arrested for one overwhelming moment, then the pulses, reacting, sent the blood boiling through his veins.

Mechanically he rose, and going to the bureau began throwing articles of clothing into an open valise near by.

Recollecting himself, and duties still undone, he

stopped these premature preparations and, the valise happening to be the object under his vision, he gave it the most prolonged amorous gaze that ever fell to the lot of insensate leather. Then catching up the letter again, he read it over and over.

That evening a messenger boy ran up the Van Tassel steps, and five minutes afterward Clover was smiling and frowning in perplexity over a telegram addressed to her.

I shall come back at the first possible moment.
GORHAM PAGE.

Aunt Love had brought her the message, and she in her mystification read it aloud. Something in Miss Berry's glance, as she met her eyes, made her color rise finely.

"You need not speak of this to Mildred," she said after a pause, with dignity. "I — I do not quite understand it."

"I don't either," thought Miss Berry, discreetly moving away. "Either he 's even more kinds of a gump than I thought, or else he 's come to his senses with a crash. I always knew when Gorham Page did start out to love a woman somethin' had got to break; and it ain't goin' to be his heart now, thank the Lord. What a pair they will make! My, my!"

Page returned on the second day toward evening. He hoped fate would favor him by sending Mildred and Jack to the illumination that night. It

did not occur to him that Clover might have gone too until he neared the house. Then the thought brought dismay. He had schooled himself for days to work and conquer among dry-as-dust details of his profession. Now, it seemed impossible to wait a matter of hours.

There was no one on the piazza when he ascended the steps, and the evening being fine the fact appeared sinister. Miss Berry answered his ring at the bell.

"Oh, it 's you, is it?" was her greeting. "Glad to see you back, Mr. Gorham. It has n't seemed right not to have you runnin' in every day."

"It is good to be here again; but I am afraid you are alone to-night."

"Yes, the young folks are down to the Fair, as usual." Miss Berry's keen eyes saw the disappointment in the earnest face. "I s'pose like as not you would n't feel like goin' down any way, wore out as you must be with all that heat."

"I would go gladly, if there were any chance of meeting them; but the people you want to meet are the ones you do not happen upon at the Fair."

Miss Lovina looked at him with a shrewd smile. "Then I guess you 'll give me a good mark for once; for it happened to come over me that you might get home to-night, and I said as much to Miss Mildred. I asked her where they 'd be, and she agreed to stay by one o' the big horses till the illumination was over."

"What time is it?" asked Page with sudden haste, wringing Miss Lovina's hand cordially.

"Oh, you 've got time, I guess," observed Aunt Love, with a comfortable chuckle. "Now have n't I got a head for somethin' more 'n cookies, Mr. Gorham?"

"If I should stop to compliment you as you deserve, I should miss the appointment," was the hearty response, as the young man lifted his hat and hurried down the steps.

The boy in the driver's seat of the Beach wagon just passing did not bear even a faint resemblance to any conventional idea of Cupid; yet surely no power less than that of the little god could have sent that conveyance exactly at the moment it was needed. Page felicitated himself on the occurrence; and in the whole history of the Fair it is doubtful whether better time was made by a pedestrian than his record to-night between the Sixtieth Street entrance and the Court of Honor.

But for all his haste, when he reached the giant horses his friends were not there. He rushed from one to the other with frantic energy, but in vain. No familiar face and form rewarded his search.

The Grand Court was lighted. The first playing of the electric fountains was over; perhaps had been over for some time. Page was too dispirited to look at his watch. For him the surroundings were stale, flat, and unprofitable, — another proof that the Kingdom of Heaven is a con-

dition rather than a place. He was just about moving away with a sense of disappointment which he condemned as unreasonably keen, when there loomed up before him a vision more beautiful to his eyes than the most lovely sculptured angel in the neighborhood.

"Well, Jack," he exclaimed, taking his cousin's hand, "here you are! I was just looking for you."

Van Tassel smiled at the eager reception.

"Thought we had flown, did you? So we have, a little way. The girls are sitting over yonder. Mildred has been sending me on periodical scouting expeditions, lest you might come down. Glad to see you back. Business go all right?"

"Yes, I 'm all right, thanks. Did n't quite get a sunstroke."

Van Tassel was striding along to keep pace with Gorham, who had instantly started in the direction Jack indicated. The latter smiled, and did not make a further attempt at conversation until the settee was reached where Clover and Mildred were waiting.

"You did come," said the latter pleasantly. "We thought you might hunt for us."

"It was so kind of you," exclaimed Page gratefully, as he greeted them both. "Now I can draw a long breath."

The four exchanged a few commonplaces concerning his trip, and then Mildred changed the subject.

"We have cards for a reception at the Woman's

Building to-night, and we have been in a dozen minds about going: but I think it would be pleasant to look in."

Gorham glanced tentatively at Clover. He had not been gazing at her this evening as was his wont, and Mildred observed the change. "It would be pleasant," he said, without enthusiasm. "Don't let me detain you, of course. I haven't been here for what seems to me a very long time, and I don't feel inclined to go indoors. Do you especially wish to attend the reception, Mrs. Van Tassel?"

"No — in fact" —

Mildred spoke quickly, for she felt her quiet sister's embarrassment. "The truth may as well be told, Mr. Page. Just previous to your appearance she had flatly refused even to approach the Woman's Building; so she cannot put on airs about relinquishing a pleasure."

"Then we might divide," suggested Page, with so much alacrity that Mildred smiled; but the smile was fleeting. She had risen, and was standing behind her sister. Now she placed a hand on her shoulder.

"Oh, my friends, look!" she cried suddenly, lifting her hand toward the east. The moon was rising behind the Peristyle. Deep in the soft sky it shone between the lofty white columns and cast a silver sheen across the summer lake.

"This is Greece, and that is the Mediterranean!" exclaimed Jack.

Mildred, after a moment of gazing, stooped and dropped a light kiss on her sister's cheek.

"Good-by, Clover." Then, with a loving pressure of the other's shoulder, she added in a jealous whisper: "My Clover."

As the other two moved away, Clover and Gorham rose simultaneously. "I believe we had the same thought," he said, looking at her with happy eyes.

"Mine was to go to the Peristyle," she answered.

"And mine."

She took his offered arm; they started down the half-deserted walk, and quickly came one of the magic changes of the place. The lights vanished, and the colossal moonlit gateway of the Peristyle gained new majesty.

"At last I can thank you for your letter," said Page.

"Were you glad to get it? I am afraid it was not much of an epistle."

"As if any word you would write could be anything but precious! It breathed of you in every line. All things are made new since I read it. My whole life, all my powers, every worthy thing I may ever attain, are yours. Is it possible that you are really going to accept them, that you can care for *me*, Clover?"

She felt his strong arm tremble under her hand, and it thrilled her; but she was silent, and his impetuous speech rushed on.

"I have had to hold under with an iron will all

my thoughts, the contradictions, the hopes and fears, of the last few days. Last night I dreamed of this. We were walking together somewhere, and the moon shone on the water. I asked you to marry me, and you looked at me pityingly and said —No. I reminded you of your letter, but still you shook your head. Clover!"

He spoke her name with tender appeal. They drew near the Peristyle and, stepping within, walked slowly down the wondrous vista of fluted columns beneath the clusters of flower-like lights.

"My letter?" she repeated softly. "How could you value that trivial little letter so much? What was there in it? I do not even remember."

Page stood still, to look in amazement into her face; but even in his surprise it did not occur to him that she might be resorting to subterfuge.

"I have the letter here," he said simply, thrusting his hand into an inside pocket. "We will see."

Clover crimsoned to her throat. She did not wish to see the letter. She suddenly feared it. What trick had been played upon her? Could Mildred — Oh, impossible!

Gorham unfolded the sheet before her reluctant gaze. Then with sudden haste she took it from him, opened it, and read the closing lines. Her breath came freer.

"Oh yes," she said, smiling in her relief. "I wrote that."

Gorham unconsciously received the paper into

his hand. He was scrutinizing her face. "What did you mean by those words?" he asked.

"Why, nothing," she answered, surprised and affected by his agitation, — "nothing except what I said. Let me read it."

"Those last words," said Page briefly, indicating them.

Clover read obediently aloud.

"I wonder — you always seem so sufficient unto yourself, so much more a man of intellect than of heart — I wonder if you ever feel, as I do more and more strongly every day, our — dependence — " The voice gradually lowered, then paused; Clover cast one beseeching, troubled glance up into her companion's face. It was as pale as hers was glowing.

"We always have been so impersonal. Of course I meant people in general," she finished, low and quickly.

Page gave her a sad smile. "We have theorized and speculated together a great deal, I know. So this was only one more speculation, was it?"

"Why, Mr. Page!" said Clover, scarcely above the breath that was failing her. "How could you think" —

"I don't know now, myself," he answered with simplicity. "I suppose I was so suffused with love of you that this one hint at reciprocation set my head aflame, and brought on an attack of emotional insanity. I ask your pardon; but all the same, Clover, I am not ashamed, and I cannot regret it.

It was my good angel who held your little hand while you wrote that, for it gave me moments of such happiness as I never knew before, and perhaps never shall again."

Clover wanted to speak and could not. She thought if he would move, or take his gaze from her face, her courage might rise. She lifted her eyes, but only far enough to note that the electric fountains were flinging their jets of color aloft; the water taking new shapes each moment with bewildering grace and rapidity.

"I never thought of you before as a woman whom it would be right for a man to ask to come down beside him; I did not know that my heart was reaching out toward yours until that day of the letter. Would you mind telling me, Clover, how long you have known that I loved you?"

Clover drew a long, involuntary breath. "I did not know it," she said at last, looking up at him bravely; and when once her eyes were held in that compelling gaze, she did not wish to escape. "I only — hoped it," she finished.

The fountains fell and vanished. The dainty flame-blossoms in the remote sculptured nooks overhead still added their soft radiance to that of the moon. The lovers were alone in that colossal aisle, that pillared temple, where for one transcendent moment they stood heart to heart. It was the period of shadow in the Court. At the other end of the lagoon, far away through spaces of darkness, the gemmed dome of Administration lifted its

cameos and starry crown against the heavens. From the distance of the lighted Peristyle the deep surrounding shadows gave a supernatural effect to this single lighted edifice, whose triumphant angels seemed to move in the waving illumination thrown over them from flaming torches. It was an aerial castle, with no affinity for earth; an exalting vision such as visited the prophets of old.

"Earlier in the evening," said Page, almost too deeply moved to speak, "I would willingly have turned from the Court of Honor. I could not find you, and its company of angels was incomplete. Now, heaven itself lies here. I ought to be a good man, my darling. You will help me. It is a debt I shall owe forevermore."

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE NEW YEAR.

THE reception at the Woman's Building proved attractive. It was late when Mildred and Jack returned home that night. All was still about the house. They parted in the usual friendly fashion, which both sought to make easy, and each felt to be constrained.

Mildred went quietly to her sister's door and listened. All was still. "Then she has been at home some time," thought the girl. "Good! That speaks volumes. Poor fellow, I 'm sorry for him." The *frou-frou* of her dress as she turned away almost drowned the voice that spoke her name. Not quite, however. She turned the handle of the door.

"Did you call me, Clover?"

"Yes; come in."

"I did n't mean to disturb you."

"Oh, I can't go to sleep. I don't want to."

The speaker put out her hand, and drew Mildred down on the side of the bed. The latter's eyes widened in their effort to penetrate the darkness.

"Something did happen, then?"

"Yes, it is all right," answered Clover, and her soft, glad tone pierced to her sister's heart.

"What do you mean by that?"

"He does love me!" What a different voice was this from the one in which she had said the same words to Jack Van Tassel five years ago!

"Of course; but, Clover, surely you don't love him!" exclaimed the other, aghast.

For answer, Clover took the hand she held and pressed it against her breast. "With every throb," she said slowly.

Mildred stared, then threw herself face down on the pillow and wept with abandon.

"Dearest, please don't," exclaimed Clover, shocked.

"I must," sobbed the other. "Oh, why did we ever see him! You are all I have in the world. I hate anybody who takes you away from me."

"Nobody can, dear. You know that," returned Clover, distressed by this rare flood. She slipped her arm around the recumbent form, and interspersed her words with loving pats. "I am so disappointed, Milly. I thought you would be as happy as I am."

"I am never as happy as you are," answered the other. "I know this is abominable, but I've got to be selfish this once. I'm just envious and miserable, Clover. Why should you always be blessing people and I never? My heart is heavy, and it hurts me all the time."

In an instant Clover sank her joy in loving compassion. It was the first admission concerning Jack that Mildred had ever made.

"My poor darling, I am so sorry," she said feelingly, "and I do not see that you have done any wrong. Instead, you have been true to yourself. Anything else would have been a dreadful mistake."

Mildred was so surprised that she stopped crying suddenly. "Then Jack has told you?" she said without lifting her face, a belated sob struggling in her throat.

"Yes. Should n't you prefer to have him go away?"

"No, not unless he wishes it. I would rather he stayed."

"Things will come right for you, dearest. They always do when one is trying to live up to her standards, and to do the best she knows how. Perhaps I have made you feel that even I thought you ought to marry him. If I have, please forgive me for adding to the cruelty of your position. I ought to have known that you would be glad, too, if it could have been Jack."

Mildred rose to a sitting position. "Let us forgive mutually," she said, wiping her eyes. "I am mortally ashamed of myself for bothering you at such a time. Wait till to-morrow morning and see me redeem my character by my treatment of that — thief!" She stooped and kissed her sister passionately. "Why should I blame him, when I know that I would not look at any woman but you if I were a man? What a lot of trouble it would have saved me, by the way!"

"I don't know," returned the other with a smile. "You see I should have been forced to refuse you."

"That is just like saying you love him better than me," with quick suspicion.

"No, no; only better than that man you were going to be."

"Well," said Mildred, shrugging her shoulder in a characteristic gesture, "I rather think I should enjoy the refreshing change of being refused once or twice. As for you, — as if I should mind your refusal! I should simply kidnap you." She stooped, and laid her cheek against Clover's once more.

Aunt Love was a happy woman next day. She was quite a heroine in the small family jubilation.

"All my life I shall owe you twelve added hours of happiness," Page said to her, when she gave him a rousing kiss.

"Well, Mr. Gorham, you know I always was good to you," she responded radiantly, and contented herself all day by drawing Mildred off into corners to discuss this and that detail of "his" and "her" behavior during the past weeks; "trifles light as air," but "confirmation strong" to Aunt Love of a good time coming, and which she dwelt upon with such profound delight and secrecy that Mildred had not the heart to refuse her an audience for all the asides she chose to make.

Gorham Page allowed himself a brief period in

which to realize his happiness before returning to Boston, but his energies now turned willingly toward his work as the means by which he could soonest carry Clover to his own home and hers; and before he left, it had been arranged that they should be married the following spring.

The day before the one set for his departure, Jack came out to Clover, who was sitting with some fancy work on the piazza. Page was at the hotel, writing business letters.

"Gorham says your cigars are too strong to be good for you," she said, looking up as he struck a match.

"Yes, he has let out from the shoulder lately," returned Jack, puffing his cigar alight.

"Do listen to him, Jack," said the other pleadingly. "Don't injure your health."

"What is my health good for?" asked the young fellow, dropping down on the edge of the piazza, upon which he extended one leg, while he embraced the other knee as he leaned against a pillar.

"Don't talk that way," said Clover. Van Tassel had never heard her use so acute a tone, and he was surprised on looking up to see her eyes swimming. "It is wicked when one has friends who love him as yours do you."

"All right, Clover. Thank you. I *am* listening to Gorham. This cigar that I have here" — he removed it from his lips, and regarded it through contracted lids — "might have become

sauerkraut by a little different process of handling." He smoked a minute in silence, then said: "Mildred has gone away, has n't she?"

"Yes; she has gone to spend a day or two with Helen Eames. Helen has been urging her all summer."

"I think I 'll go back with Gorham to-morrow," added Van Tassel briefly.

"Why, Jack!" Clover dropped her work and gazed at him.

"Yes, I 'll go back." The young man flipped the ash from his cigar off into the grass.

"Do you feel that you have seen the Fair?"

"Yes, too many Fairs." Jack smiled rather dolefully as he glanced up toward the blue eyes.

"I can't urge you to stay," said Clover sadly.

"Oh, perhaps I 'll come back," remarked the other cheerfully, "when I get my second wind, as it were. The first supply has been about knocked out of me."

"You don't look well."

"Oh yes, I am well enough."

"You have behaved like an angel, Jack."

He laughed. "I feel a little like one of those angels on the side of the Transportation Building, — the sort you can pass under a door without touching their buttons, you know."

"Did you plan to go without saying good-by to Mildred?"

"Oh no."

"I 'm glad of that. It would hurt her."

"No. I will run up to the Eameses this evening and kill two birds with one stone. I ought to say good-by to Miss Eames. She has been very kind to me. That is," looking up inquiringly, "if you and Gorham can spare me on your last evening. How is that?"

There was dew again in the violet eyes. "It does not seem right for me to be happy when you are not, Jack," Clover said, unconsciously clasping her hands together. "If I could only say something that would stay with you as a comfort! I am afraid to seem to preach when my own lot is what it is. You are plucky and have plenty of self-control, but I hope you will not try to lean only on your own strength. We can all have faith that, so long as we do right, the outcome will be the best thing for us, whatever it is."

"I'm not kicking," said Jack quietly, "but I am going away because I believe it is the best thing both for Mildred and me."

"Does she know your intention?"

"No. It is rather sudden. I only took it today. I have staid here long enough to bring things the way I want them if it were on the cards. Now, I will do the next best thing."

A couple of days afterward, Mildred returned from her visit. She came breezily into the room where her sister was sitting.

"Oh, I am so glad to see you!" exclaimed Clover, starting up and kissing her.

"Let us look at you," said Mildred, holding her

off and scrutinizing her with bright, audacious eyes. "No, they are not red," she continued; "I thought I might be coming home to a Niobe."

"They are both gone," said Clover plaintively.

"Yes." Mildred turned away to a mirror, and began removing her hat-pins. "I have been kept so busy consoling Helen Eames that I could n't come home any sooner to dry your tears."

Her sister look at her inquiringly. Was there any bravado in this disappointing gayety? Apparently not. Mankind loves a lover, and Clover, especially loving this lover, felt tempted to resentment; but might it not be that Mildred indeed felt more light-hearted than for months past? Why should she be blamed, if she found relief in the knowledge that her home was free from a presence which had been in a way a constant reproach?

"I wish Jack did care for Helen Eames," returned the elder, unconsciously sighing.

"Yes; would n't it be convenient?"

"I 'm glad you 've come home, Milly. The house has seemed so empty."

"Oh, but what lovely flowers!" exclaimed the latter, espying a great bowl of roses in a shaded corner. "Why did n't you tell me?"

"They are not yours, my dear." Clover smiled at her work. "They came last night."

"They are beautiful. Did brother actually remember to have such a sweet substitute sent you on your first lonely evening? I am proud of him. What else interesting has happened?"

"Nothing, I think. Gorham received a characteristic letter from Robert just before he left. He gave it to me to keep, with one that came from Hilda. Perhaps you would like to see it?"

"Indeed, I would. Nice, jolly Mr. Page! I wish they lived next door."

Mildred took the letter Clover handed her. "I'm going to read it aloud. It probably says nice things about you.

"DEAR GORHAM, — So you have won that sweet woman! Blessings on you, my boy! I may be partial, but I believe you are somewhere near good enough for her. Truth compels me to state, however, that your gain is my loss, owing to the overweening satisfaction it is to Hilda. In an evil moment, I underrated her prescience when she prophesied this happy event, and the consequence is that I am considering living at the club until the first blush of her triumph passes over. It flavors the matutinal oatmeal and the after-dinner coffee. I cannot indulge in a short nap without encountering a tall nightmare in which the wife of my bosom pops out from unexpected corners and ejaculates 'I told you so.' She sits opposite me now, writing a letter to go with this. I know those are burning words that are growing with such swiftness. I can almost hear the paper hiss. However, I am just as pleased as she is. Please give Clover my love, — you see I am not slow to use my privilege in naming her, — and tell her I am sure the world will be a better place for such a home as you and she

will make in it. Indeed, I feel more than I can say on the subject.

"With kind regards to all,

"Your brother,

"ROBERT."

With the early autumn came the Parliament of Religions, — the congress which, among the many that preceded and followed it, proved, to the general surprise, to be the one of greatest interest to the public. Miss Berry was indefatigable in her attendance; and her young ladies were often with her. The names of those Orientals, whose words she listened to as to music, were impracticable to her; but their dark faces and graceful gestures were fixed in her mind forever. Aunt Love was one of thousands whose complacent generalization of "the heathen" received a blow.

Clover did her share in the entertaining of some of these scholarly delegates from the far East; and Mildred found a totally novel *sauce piquante* in the society of a handsome coffee-colored Indian, who wore a pink silk turban and mouse-colored robe, and talked transcendental philosophy in the purest English while gazing at her from long, beautiful eyes.

Lieutenant Eames had rejoined his regiment, whether or no hiding a heart-wound, Clover did not know. Mildred said nothing. October, the busiest, gayest month of the Fair, came on. Such of society as had hitherto been obdurate, now return-

ing from seashore and mountains, made one united, belated rush for the widely extolled Exposition. The climax of attendance during one day came on October 9th, Chicago's own celebration, the anniversary of the great fire, when more than seven hundred and fifty thousand persons were in the grounds. The effect, when one could rise to a slight eminence and look down, was such as is observed in a trap so full of flies that there is only a general stir and movement among the mass; no form is visible.

The day was faultless. Not a cloud flecked the azure against which shone the groups of the Agricultural Building, that one edifice which interposed no roof between its superb statuesque decorations and the revealing blue of the firmament. The three mammoth fountains at the end of the Court of Honor played in dazzling sunshine, filling the air with crystals.

Clover and Mildred were present, attended by the Pink Turban, splendid in his unconsciousness of being regarded on all sides as a sort of embodied apotheosis of the Midway.

The ceremonies of the day began with what Clover's chair-boy naïvely called a procession of "the hussies," although the Chicago Hussars might have taken exception to the term. From that moment until late evening, the interest was not permitted to flag. A tightrope-walker in cavalier costume ran and pirouetted high in air before the Peristyle, the scarlet and gold of his costume showing jewel-like against the pure columns.

A large chorus sang national hymns. The young liberty-bell pealed. Hundreds of children in fancy costumes marched around the lagoons; but the magnitude of the crowd defeated its own entertainment by the fact that the procession of elaborately prepared floats could not force their way through the avenues.

It was all very wonderful, but greatest of all was the fabulous splendor of the night display. The Van Tassel party viewed it from the roof of the New York Building. Surely, Chicago had earned the right to celebrate herself by bombardments of colored fire, if so it pleased her, and she did so this evening on a scale which trebled previous efforts, and made the heavens as luminous as on that night, twenty-two years ago, when she was the victim instead of the instigator of her pyrotechnics.

Once more the city meant to distinguish the World's Fair by novel and striking accompaniments to its intrinsic grandeur. It was intended that its close should be attended with a metaphorical flourish of trumpets; but close upon this last day, shame and affliction visited Chicago in the murder of its mayor, and all festivities were renounced. The last hours of the existence of the Dream City were mournfully quiet.

"A bubble is always most beautiful just before it vanishes," Mildred said to Clover, as they stood together in the Court of Honor on that afternoon, waiting for the fateful moment.

"It never looked more lovely," replied Clover.

They spoke softly, as in a holy place, and with one accord looked up at the infinite message in carven letters, the significant legacy of the summer's grand experience : —

"Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

A strain of solemn sweetness sounded through the harmonies that poured without ceasing from the orchestra in a neighboring pavilion, touching every heart in that waiting throng.

The rays of the low-hanging sun shot for one moment past the side of the Administration Building, gleamed through the waters of the fountain, and traveled a swift path across the lagoon to illume for an instant the golden Republic.

"It is the swan-song!" exclaimed Mildred.

A long, sullen roar sounded from the east. It was the first peal of the salute which bade the Dream City vanish. The sisters clasped hands, as they had once before in the selfsame spot. The eyes that had sought each other, dark with excitement and anticipation, that day, now saw through mists of tears. The myriad flags they had seen unfurled in gladness now with one accord slipped down from sight, and the music died as the message from the cannon's mouth told the country around that all was over.

Jack had been with them on the opening day. Mildred could recall how earnest and handsome he looked, standing with his hat off, carried away by the spirit of the occasion. A great wave of com-

passion swept over her heart, and mingled with the yearning and sense of loss in the air. The weather was chill now and cloudy. She was glad to slip her arm through Clover's and hurry home.

Soon after this, Aunt Love returned to Pearfield. There was some discussion as to whether she should take Blitzen; but that sagacious animal, as was usual when anything inimical to his interests was in the air, seemed fully aware of her doubts, lost his high spirits, haunted her like a silent ghost, walked when she walked, sat when she sat, and whined as he gazed at her, until the persecuted woman yielded to his mute entreaties. Electra stayed, and remained the heroine of her latticed inclosure, — an additional reason for Blitzen to prefer returning to his native heath.

Aunt Love's farewell was by no means a sad one. She was radiant as she remarked how soon Clover would be her neighbor.

"And in that way we 'll get you, too," she said to Mildred; but that young woman demurred.

"Of course she will come," said Clover.

"I'm not sure," persisted the younger.

"Well now, my dear," said Miss Berry in parting advice, "don't you wander through the woods too long and take up with a crooked stick at last; but, whatever you do, marry a man o' your own color, who wears a hat and coat instead of a turban and a bath wrapper. Remember that."

"I don't know," responded Mildred, with a teasing smile. "The Pink Turban says he has a pair

of very handsome diamond earrings. Perhaps, if I should have my ears pierced, he would let me wear them a part of the time."

"Go 'way!" exclaimed Miss Berry, with a repudiatory gesture.

The old Scotch housekeeper soon returned, joyful to be back again, and felicitating herself that the Fair was safely over; and life might have been supposed to move on as before, but it did not.

Clover had come into a new state of existence, the deep, constant joy of which she never expressed in words. Except for the framed photograph on her dressing-table, Mildred might have believed her equable sister to be unchanged in thought as well as habit; but Mildred's own mode of life was noticeably changed this season. The winter was a hard one. Cold weather set in in November, and the reaction from the great business activity of the year before caused a depression cruelly felt among the poor. Charitable work was the order of the day, and Mildred entered into it heart and soul.

"Slumming was never so fashionable," she said; and thus lightly accounting for the new direction of her energy, she learned novel views of life, which would modify her character in all time to come. Clover was her efficient aid, and her friend Helen Eames sometimes went on these expeditions too, under the shadow of her wing.

It was rather a grievance with Helen that Mildred never of her own accord referred to Jack, and

if questioned, made brief replies. Mr. Van Tassel was a Chicago man and belonged here. He was, in Helen's own phraseology, "perfectly fascinating," and not to be lightly dropped. She intended to keep herself posted as to the probabilities of his return; but Mildred early nipped her plans in the bud.

"We can't reckon on Mr. Van Tassel as a Chicagoan any more," she said. "He is reading law very earnestly now in Boston, and he has lived there so many years, it is home to him. Besides that, he is devoted to Clover, and when she is married to his cousin, that will be another tie to keep him at the East."

Upon which Miss Eames grew thoughtful, and fortune shortly after throwing in her way an invitation to visit a friend in Boston, she incontinently dropped her pilgrimages amid Chicago's back streets, and departed on the most limited train available.

Soon afterward, Mildred received a gay letter from her. Mr. Van Tassel had called, and had been one of the theatre party her hostess had given the night before. She was having a charming time, and hoped dear Mildred would not take something in those dreadful basements before she could return to help her again.

"Would n't it be strange," Clover asked, when her sister showed her the letter, "if little Helen should catch Jack's heart on the rebound, after all?"

Mildred returned her look with unusual gravity. "Are men's hearts so unfaithful, do you think?" she asked seriously.

"Sometimes," answered Clover, "when they despair; and women's, too."

"Then they are unworthy," Mildred said quietly.

No winter ever suffered more than this by contrast with the summer. In public print and by private hearsay, the bitter needs of the poor surrounded one. The corpse of the White City lay wrapped in a winding-sheet of snow. The sisters never entered the grounds from the afternoon its spirit departed. They looked askance, in passing, at the buildings, with their cold, silent surroundings, where so recently all had been life and warmth. The same domes and façades upreared under the cold sky. One could only say as he does in glancing tenderly and sadly at a dear, dead face: "How natural it looks!"

Little wonder that plans were innumerable for preserving a portion of that dream of beauty, to be resuscitated and to become the joy of one more summer; but the work of spoliation had begun, and would march on inexorably.

"Miss Mildred has grown awful quiet, Mrs. Van Tassel," said old Jeanie one day in confidence. "It 's a wrong you 're doing her, I 'm thinking, letting her quench all her bright spirits in those holes she visits."

"I think not, Jeanie," Clover replied. "Miss Mildred is having a deep experience; but we can't

help the sorrow in the world except by coming close to it."

"I saw tears in her eyes the other night," whispered Jeanie profoundly, "and I asked the poor child why, and what do you suppose she answered?"

"I suppose she had the heartache over some of our new friends."

"Maybe; but if she did, she would n't acknowledge it. She said 't was because the Chicago Beach Hotel was closed for the season, and there could n't be any dances there!"

Clover smiled. "That sounds as if her spirits had not all departed," she remarked.

But she had been quick to observe the alteration in Mildred. Sometimes she hoped that Jack's absence had wrought the fulfillment of his desire, but she did not seek to probe her sister's feeling. If unseen influences were expanding the entrance to the holy of holies in the young girl's heart, what right had she to interfere? Sometimes she feared Mildred was depressed by the prospect of a marriage which would break up this home. Whatever the cause, the fact remained that her sister's interest in society had waned, and the part she kept up in it was perfunctory, and did not extend beyond those efforts which courtesy demanded. She had never been more companionable with Clover, however, and the latter had never enjoyed her so much.

Thus matters stood when the New Year was

ushered in. The day was clear and bright, and many thousands took advantage of the fact that Jackson Park passed back to-day into the public jurisdiction. Curiosity seekers and vandals poured down the strangely mute Midway Plaisance and through the avenues of the Park. Clover and Mildred did not swell the number who gayly parodied "After the Ball."

And now was to come the long pull and the strong pull of winter. Mildred wondered in her own mind why the prospect should look so very dreary. No other season had ever seemed like it. Doubtless it was her new and close acquaintance with the griefs of others that had changed the world, and made life a novel sort of struggle.

The new year was less than a week old when Clover received a letter from Jack, announcing his intention to make them a call.

"I won't give any excuses," he wrote; "I admit that I am coming simply because I want so much to see Mildred and you that I believe I shall do better work after indulging in that pleasure."

"Loyal as ever," said Clover, looking up, and Mildred did not raise her eyes from her work, but she was smiling.

Jack had said he could not set a precise time for his arrival, but that in a few days they might expect him to drop down.

When his determination had been taken, Van Tassel pushed forward his preparations with all haste, and his restlessness did not quiet until he

found himself, in the early evening of the 8th of January, walking down the old familiar home street once more. As he reached the corner, he suddenly observed that clouds of smoke mingled with large red cinders were rolling up from the south.

"Must be a fire in the Fair grounds," he thought. "I wonder if the girls know."

They were coming out of their door, with their outside wraps on, when Van Tassel came up the steps, and they gave him a greeting in which excitement and cordiality mingled.

"There is a fire in the Fair," they all three said at once.

"You will take me down there, Jack," exclaimed Mildred. "Clover was going, but she has n't been well and she ought not to."

Clover protested faintly, suggesting some of the rites of hospitality for Jack's benefit; but he would hear nothing save carrying out Mildred's wishes, and after taking a moment to deposit his bag in the hall, he set off beside her.

"How is Gorham, I wonder?" murmured Clover with a comical little smile and plaintive raised eyebrows, as she looked after the figures retreating into the dark. "I feel as if I had been in a whirlwind." She looked toward the once gay hotel; now, its many sightless eyes gazed blankly southward. "I will go there," she exclaimed with sudden determination; and reëntering the house, she called Jeanie, and made her hurry into her wraps. The housekeeper obeyed, with many a

fussy groan over her mistress' caprice, and soon they were walking northward.

They ascended the dark stairway to the piazza of the hotel, and peered through the door at the office, where one dim light showed. Clover was a bit frightened, but she knocked on the glass. A man appeared behind the office desk, and, picking up the lantern which was the vast hotel's single attempt at illumination, advanced through dark spaces, casting strange shadows on the marble floor as he came.

"May we look at the fire from here?" asked Clover, wishing Gorham were with her rather than Jeanie.

"Yes; I see they've got a fire down there," the man remarked imperturbably, but he stood back for them to enter, and then clanged the heavy door behind them. It echoed in the big empty hall, and Jeanie looked so discomfited that Clover smiled, though she herself thought the situation rather eerie.

The last time she had stood here, the place had been ablaze with electric light, and gay with music and guests. She had ascended with her friends to a balcony to view the lighted White City in the zenith of its beauty, and to revel in the fiery marvels which mirrored themselves in the lake. It flashed into her memory how enthusiastic the crowds had been over the rising of a slender cylinder of light which poised itself aloft, then slowly unrolled until the stars and stripes appeared in

the heavens. She could hear again the patriotic salutes from a congregation of boats as Old Glory sailed away across the lake.

Now, all was hushed and dark. A second man, who appeared in the office, struck a match and lit another lantern, by whose light he proceeded to pilot the two women upstairs.

Jeanie muttered and grunted to such an extent that Clover relented after the ascent of three flights, and the old man led her to the window of one of the white-sheeted bedrooms, from which she eagerly looked.

"Oh, Jeanie, I am sure it is the Peristyle!" she exclaimed, gazing horror-struck on the volume of fire and smoke visible through the bare ribs of the Spectatorium. "What will — what will Mr. Page say!" Involuntarily she pressed her hand on her beating heart, seeming to hear the roar of those cruel flames.

Meanwhile Mildred and Jack had caught a train, which they left at Sixtieth Street. The young man was glad that the tension of his anticipations had been relieved by the unconventional circumstances of his welcome. To be joined with Mildred in the present excitement was far preferable to the doubtful home evening he had looked forward to. Arm in arm they pressed forward against the cold lake wind toward the shore, and did not pause until they had neared the Music Hall.

Only once Mildred spoke as they hurried on.

"I am afraid," she said breathlessly, "that it is the Peristyle."

"It looks like it," said Jack briefly. The hoofs of galloping horses smote the hard ground, and the puffing of fire-engines was borne to their ears before they reached the scene of confusion. There they stood still, Mildred clinging with both hands to Van Tassel's arm, her wide, horrified eyes fixed on the blazing Casino, the building into which the Peristyle merged at the southern end, as it did into Music Hall on the north.

The lagoon was coated with a thin sheet of ice, across which the sparks, after circling around the head of the golden goddess, whirled up the Court of Honor in lines of fire.

Above, the wind bore the glowing brands swirling over the great neighboring buildings. Streams of water fell with no quenching power into the flames.

"Why don't they bend all their energies to saving the Peristyle?" exclaimed Mildred.

"That is what they are doing now. See?"

The dauntless firemen were fighting the flames at close range. A dozen streams of water at once were directed upon the Peristyle; but in vain. The walls of the Casino crashed in; devouring tongues of fire fastened upon the first noble pillar and ate upward.

Van Tassel felt his companion shudder in her furs, and put his hand on hers. The crowd that had gathered in the very spot where they

cheered the summer's pyrotechnic display were strangely motionless and silent, watching with fascinated eyes and saddened faces as the fire crept upward, leaping from pillar to pillar, ascending toward the statues which stood serene and fair above smoke and flame long after the watchers expected them to succumb. At last, each white figure in turn, seeming suddenly to become aware of its environment, wavered on its pedestal, hesitated, and with one shrinking look below, plunged downward into the fiery chasm.

"Jack!" gasped Mildred, shivering from head to foot, her dilated eyes never leaving the heart-rending sight.

For an instant, free of smoke and illumined gloriously, shone out for a last time the heavenly promise: —

"Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

"The Quadriga!" groaned Van Tassel, for the grand arch was seized upon, and swiftly melted away in the furnace. No search-light of the summer ever compared in grandeur with the effect that succeeded to the crumbling of the staff below the famous group, the pride of the noble Peristyle. The iron skeleton supports, laid bare, were invisible in the night. Columbus, his chariot, the outriders with their banners, and the spirited horses led by maidens, stood triumphant in the vivid light. It was a sight of supernatural beauty. In the glare of the leaping flames the snow-white

horses seemed to stir restlessly and paw the air, as they arched their necks and gazed proudly down into the glowing chasm.

"Jump, oh, jump!" cried Mildred; then, unable to endure the impending catastrophe, her nerves strained to the utmost, she turned with a wild movement, and sobbing, hid her head on Jack's breast.

He put his arms around her.

"The — the Peristyle has gone!" she exclaimed chokingly, — "gone back — to heaven!"

"Yes, darling," he answered close to her ear. "My rival. Forgive me, but you are making me so happy I can't realize anything except that I have you in my arms. What does it mean? only that you are overwrought?"

Mildred lifted her face slightly, but away from the burning pyre.

"Your rivals are all gone, Jack," she said, as steadily as she could speak. "Even I do not count."

Half an hour afterward, Clover heard them enter the house, and hurried down to the parlor.

When she pushed aside the portière and entered, she paused in amazement and her heart leaped up, for Jack's arms were about Mildred and his lips were pressed to hers.

They saw her, and in another instant she was beside them, her hands clasped in theirs.

As she gazed at her sister, mute for joy, Mildred

regarded her with a tender version of her beautiful smile.

"I believe," she said, "this lifts the last cloud from Clover's horizon."

"Yes," answered the latter rather unsteadily; "the world never looked so bright to me as now. I think, Jack," turning to him, her face aglow, "heaven itself must have grown happier to-night."

Van Tassel's eyes shone wistfully. "I hope he knows," he answered gently.